

STIRRING STORIES *for Girls*

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Underwater Adventure

KATHLEEN FIDLER

SWIMMING close together the two girls drifted over the sea-bed below Farhead Point. They flapped their swim-fins lazily as they explored the underwater grottoes of waving seaweed and anemones and watched the crabs scuttle across the white sand. A jellyfish floated by and a small shoal of white-bait parted on each side of them and swam past serenely, accepting the two girls with the aqualungs as sea-creatures like themselves. Above them the sunlit surface of the sea made a shining silver roof.

Mary Semple swam slowly upwards followed by Anna Denholm. Both eighteen years old, they were keen members of their Sub-Aqua Club in London and obeyed to the letter its

instructions never to swim alone and to keep close together under the sea. They were wearing aqualungs strapped to their shoulders—cylinders of compressed air from which a rubber pipe led to their mouths enabling them to breathe air from the cylinder while swimming under water. Mary and Anna did most things together, even to spending their holidays at the west Highland manse with Mary's uncle, the Rev. David Semple. The manse looked out across lovely Badcall Bay, studded with islands, a paradise for two such keen underwater swimmers.

They surfaced and took off their masks and mouthpieces and sunned themselves on the long flat rock before the cave where they had left their clothes.

"My! That was just dandy!" Mary said. "It's such lovely clear water and the seaweed looks like a garden, red and yellow, brown, purple and green. It's marvellous."

"We're lucky to have such calm weather to go exploring but the only treasure we've found yet is this old shoe," Anna laughed.

From round the headland came the sound of an outboard motor. Mary lifted her head and peered over the rocks to their left. Round the point came a small boat steered by a young man of about nineteen. Fishing equipment lay across the thwart. "It's that boy who's staying at the hotel," Mary told Anna. "He's got Tom McLeod's boat—the fisherman, you know. Tom said he was a Canadian."

The boy stopped the outboard motor, let down an anchor and began to prepare his fishing gear.

A mischievous gleam came into Mary's eye. "He's going to fish. It might be fun to provide him with an unusual catch," she giggled, looking at the sodden old shoe that Anna had brought up from the sea-bed.

Anna caught her meaning. "You think we could fix it on his hook? But won't he see us?"

"Not if we slip into the water just below here and swim round the Point. He's pretty busy with his gear. We can approach under water."

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Quickly they donned their masks and aqualungs again and let themselves gently down from the rock into the quiet pool below. They skirted the sunken rocks of the Point then headed out into the shelving depths of the bay, swimming closely side by side. Mary carried the old shoe. Suddenly a shadow in the gleaming ceiling of the sea told them they were beneath the boat. Mary judged that the Canadian would be fishing from the stern, and they approached the bows of the boat where he was less likely to see them. The boat was drifting with the set of the tide and the young man was trolling or dragging a gleaming spoon-bait near the sea-bed on a long length of line. Anna and Mary bided their time, keeping forward a little of the boat. Suddenly Mary spied the glittering spoon bait moving steadily through the water. She swam up to it and with a quick movement thrust the shoe over the triangle of moving hooks. At once the line tightened and the fisherman in the boat jerked the hooks home. A fish!

Mary and Anna swam to the other side of the boat ready to surface and enjoy the fun. Up they came just as the shoe was hauled in!

"Well, I'm durned!" the youth exclaimed. "How come I picked up that?"

Two peals of laughter made him swing round. There were Mary and Anna treading water, their mouth-pieces released, watching him. At first he scowled, then the funny side of it struck him too and he began to chuckle. "Guess I'd no idea there were a couple of mermaids around or I'd have chosen another spot for some quiet fishing!"

"Mind if we hang on to the boat?" Anna asked a little breathlessly. "Stooging around is a bit tiring."

"Sure! Hang on, though you don't deserve my hospitality after that trick." There was a twinkle in his eye. "Say, I'd no idea there was anyone along this coast with underwater outfits. I use one myself, 'way back home. Why not climb into the boat and take a real rest?"

"What about your fishing?" Mary asked.



At once the Canadian began to play the "fish"

"Oh, I reckon you'll have frightened away all the fish round about here," he grinned. "I might as well take you ladies any place you want to go along the coast and put you ashore where you've got your gear and continue my fishing in peace after tea." He helped them both over the stern and started the outboard motor.

They circled slowly about the entrancing green and rocky islands in the bay. "This is delightful," Mary said, peering over the side into the limpid depths below the boat. "I'm afraid we've spoiled your fishing, though," she said, a little conscience-stricken.

"To be honest, I was getting a little tired of my own company," the boy laughed lightly.

"You're an American, aren't you?" Anna asked.

"A Canadian," he corrected her. "I'm from Winnipeg. The name's Dunbeath. Donald Dunbeath."

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In turn Mary gave their names, then remarked, "You've got a Scottish-sounding name, though."

"Yes, my grandfather was a Scot—came from these parts around 1914, I guess."

"Is that what brought you here all the way from Canada? Did you come to look up your relations? Any luck?" Mary asked.

The boy shook his head. "I wasn't expecting to find any. I guess I was just kinda curious, that's all. You see, my grandfather was the only child. He enlisted in 1914 to fight in France when he was not much older than I am, and he was killed on the Somme in 1916, but before that he'd met my grandmother. She was a Canadian and a dancer on the stage. Soldiers hadn't expectations of long life in those days, so during grandfather's first leave they just got married."

"How romantic!" Anna declared.

Donald Dunbeath gave a wry smile. "I reckon my great-grandfather, Alexander Dunbeath, didn't think so. He was all against it. He'd got an old-fashioned idea that the stage wasn't very respectable and he forbade my grandfather to go ahead with the marriage."

"And your grandfather just disobeyed him?"

"I guess so. Gee, parents must have been martinetes in those days! Anyway, great-grandfather was very angry and he wrote my grandfather such a snorter of a letter that he never replied to it. Then, after my grandfather was killed, my grandmother went back to Canada taking my father with her. He was just a babe in arms then."

"Did your grandmother never try to get in touch with old Alexander Dunbeath?" Mary asked.

Donald shook his head. "She must have had her pride too. She got married again some years afterwards, and I reckon she kinda forgot about old Alexander Dunbeath away in Scotland. But she kept the bitter letter he wrote for I found it among my father's papers when he died."

"And that decided you to come here?" Mary gave him an interested glance.

"Maybe I was just curious to know where my family hailed from, and maybe I felt a bit sorry for the old man and wondered if *he'd* been a bit sorry for writing that letter, too. I thought I'd come over and try to find out something about him."

"And have you?" Anna asked.

"Not much! You see, he'd have been eighty-six if he'd lived and there's hardly anyone left who knew him. Old Tom McLeod told me he was drowned when his yacht foundered somewhere off this coast in 1929. After my grandfather was killed in the war he took to living more and more on the sea. I guess he felt more at home on the sea than anywhere for he was a grand sailor, Tom said. He had an old fisherman to help him man his yacht and he hardly ever came ashore for long."

"What an interesting story!" Anna said.

"I'm afraid it's just an old yarn and I'll never know any more. Ah, well, I've sure had a swell time here cruising and fishing and I guess I can't grumble. Look! I've got a packet of sandwiches and a flask of tea under the stern seat here. Like to share?"

The afternoon ran swiftly by till Donald Dunbeath put the girls ashore near the cave where they had left their clothes.

"Thanks a lot for the cruise, and the tea. It's been just grand," the girls thanked him.

He gave his pleasant shy smile. "I think the company's been swell. Next time I do a bit of trolling, though, I'll be watching out for old shoes. See you again sometime, perhaps tomorrow?"

The next day, however, rain clouds blew in from the Atlantic and there came one of those deluges that the West Highlands know too well. Mary and Anna were thrown upon their own resources in the manse, and tired of reading, could only watch the rain drearily washing down the panes.

"Could I type your sermon for you, Uncle David?" Mary asked, anxious for something to do.

David Semple gave her a whimsical smile as he put down his newspaper. "No, my lassie. I'm the only man who can read

my own writing. I once left a note for Tom McLeod—he's the beadle at church, you know—and he thought the doctor had called and left a prescription for his rheumatism, so he took my note to the chemist in the village and Tom said he got the rarest bottle he ever had! It did him a power of good," Uncle David chuckled.

"How long is the weather likely to go on like this, Mr. Semple?" Anna asked.

"No doubt tomorrow it'll rain itself out. The glass is rising. You'll just have to occupy yourselves round the house for another day."

Mary had been glancing casually over her uncle's newspaper as it lay upon the table. It was the *West Highland Journal*, a weekly paper giving local news. Suddenly she pounced on an advertisement in the "Wanted" column.

"Listen to this! 'Wanted, maps and charts of Badcall and Edderachylis Bays around 1930, also particulars of wrecks on this coast. Box 107.'" she read aloud. "You've been here twenty years, Uncle David, and Grandfather was minister here before you. Have you any old charts?"

"There might be some in the attic." Uncle David looked rather vague. "Some of your grandfather's books and papers are still up there, I believe."

"Could we have a look?" Mary asked.

"Yes, it will give you something to do tomorrow if it rains," Uncle David agreed with an amused grin.

The next day the rain was still lashing down but a few blue breaks among the clouds betokened better weather. Mary and Anna climbed to the attic. It was a strange echoing place, lit by sky-lights and one dormer window. Like most attics, it contained the accumulated junk of several generations of the Semples. There was a decrepit bedstead, a discarded arm-chair, two hideous black vases, several dusty oil-paintings in chipped and tarnished gilt frames. In a cupboard were piles of books, books of sermons and travel, books about fishing and sailing, then, suddenly, at the back of the cupboard Mary came on what she was seeking. In a large stiff-backed folder



Like most attics it contained the junk of generations

tied with tapes were a number of old charts of the coast.

"These might be useful to 'Box 107,'" Mary remarked. "Let's take a look at the charts first. They might be interesting to us for our underwater swimming for they show the set of the currents."

"There are submarine contour lines showing the way the coastline shelves," Anna pointed out, equally interested.

They spread the charts on the attic floor and went on their hands and knees to examine them. All at once Mary gave a little cry. "Look at that! See that small island Eilean Rudh beyond the group of islands at the entrance to the bay? Look what's printed in red ink beside it. The ink's so faded I can only just decipher it." Mary read aloud, "'Here the *Sunbeam* struck and foundered by the Chair Rock in a gale during the night of September 7, 1929.'"

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"A wreck?" Anna was quick to catch Mary's excitement. "We've always wanted to explore a wreck. Is it easy to reach the island?"

Mary studied the island's position on the chart. "Yes, if we hired Tom McLeod's boat we could easily get there. I wonder what the coast of Eilean Rudh is like and the position of the Chair Rock. Eilean Rudh? Let's see. That means 'The Red Isle.' Eilean Rudh is the Gaelic name. How would you like to take the aqualungs and do a bit of prospecting tomorrow if the weather clears?"

"I'd love it," Anna agreed promptly. "But the wreck might have broken up in nearly thirty years."

"It depends whether it's in a sheltered bay or not. The only person who can tell us about it is old Tom McLeod. He's lived here all his life. We'll ask him."

The next day was one of cloudless sunshine with a flat calm over the sea. "It's just grand for underwater swimming," Mary declared as they ran down to Tom McLeod's little stone jetty and peered into the limpid pools below.

"May we have your boat today, Tom?" Mary asked him.

"Aye, I'm thinking you can. Mr. Dunbeath has no' been around for the last twa days and they were saying up at the hotel that he's awa' to Glasgow, so he'll no' be requiring it."

"That's fine, then. We'll take it." For all that, Mary could not help a note of disappointment creeping into her voice at the news that the young Canadian had left.

"If he did happen to turn up wanting a boat, there is still Andrew Cameron's," Tom added.

"Tom, do you remember anything of the wreck of the *Sunbeam* off the islands about thirty years ago?" Mary asked him.

"Aye, so I do! A bonnie yacht she was! Went down in a terrible gale by the Chair Rock on Eilean Rudh."

"A yacht? Are there rough seas by the Chair Rock, then?"

"No, for the rock lies in the shelter of a little bay. A strange thing it was, now, that the yacht should go down there, but it was a terrible tempest. There were some thought that the

captain and his man were swept overboard earlier and that the yacht was battered here and there by the seas with no one at her helm. Then she shipped water and sank when she came by the Chair Rock."

"Has anyone ever tried to reach her? I mean, no divers have been down to her, have they?" Anna asked him.

Tom shook his head slowly. "What would be the use of that, now? It is not as if she carried valuable cargo. There would be little worth divers going down. She was just a small sea-going yacht."

"Does she still lie by the Chair Rock?" Mary enquired.

"A long time it is since I took my boat round by Eilean Rudh, but I have heard tell that she is still to be seen if the water is calm, lying in about forty feet of water."

"Is the Chair Rock easy to find?" Mary asked.

"Shaped like a great chair it is, just under the lee of the island."

"Right!" Mary placed their equipment in the boat and she and Anna took their places ready to start the outboard motor just as soon as Tom pushed them out. Tom hesitated, however, his hand on the boat hook. "Look, now, Miss Mary, it's not going down to that wreck you'll be? It's a strange mischancy thing to be doing, yon. You'll not be thinking of it, now?"

"We'll be all right, Tom. We don't take any risks, I promise you. We'll just take a look-see, that's all." Mary smiled reassuringly at him and started the engine, but Tom shook his head doubtfully as the dinghy moved away from the shore.

"It is not good to be disturbing the bones of old ships," he said.

Mary and Anna were not in the least disturbed by superstition as they skimmed over the placid waters. Anna studied the chart while Mary steered the boat out of Badcall Bay and among the maze of small islands at its mouth. At last they came to Eilean Rudh, a small bow-shaped island. A tangle of reddish seaweed washed around its base. "That must be why it's called the Red Isle," Mary commented. In the angle of a

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She beckoned Anna to swim round it with her.

low headland was a small, deeply-shelving bay. Mary eased off the motor.

"If there's a rock that looks like a chair, then this is the place," she declared.

"Look there!" Anna cried, pointing.

A great square rock, backed by another smooth-faced rock and two rounded rocks on each side of it made a swimmer's chair just below the cliff. Mary steered into the tiny bay and stopped the outboard motor. Only the ripple from their boat disturbed the glassy calm. They let down the anchor, then slipped off the duffle coats they wore over their swim suits, put on their aqualungs and masks and slipped on their swim-fins.

"It will be all right to leave the boat here without anyone aboard?" Anna asked.

"Sure! It's safely anchored. In any case, you know the rules of the Sub-Aqua Club. Two people must always dive together."

Mary adjusted her nose-clip and mouthpiece, took a breath or two to ensure the aqualung was working properly, then slipped over the stern, followed by Anna. A moment later they were swimming away from the sunlight into the cool green depths.

The two girls swam together like shadows, Anna turning where Mary led. They threaded their way among rocky grottoes, sighting an occasional lobster or large crab. Now and again a dog-fish or a wrasse slipped past them but there seemed to be no sign of a wreck. Mary was just thinking that the search was almost hopeless on this rock-strewn coast when, rising a little to swim over a boulder, she came on the ship cradled in a hollow of white sand between two rocky arms.

"It was so barnacled and covered by seaweed that at first she took it for another rock, but something in its shape reminded her of the bows of a ship. She beckoned Anna to swim round it with her. The yacht lay at a slight angle, still whole, but mantled in green weeds while red sea-urchins grew along her hull. Mary swam upwards by the stern and there.

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sure enough, was the guard-rail and the sodden broken timbers of what had once been a deck. Beyond lay the open hatch to the cabin. It was plain it had been stoved in by a heavy sea. From it the companion-way led to the cabin. Mary hesitated a moment and she and Anna looked at each other through their masks and Mary pointed towards the cabin. Anna nodded, and Mary crept through the gaping hatch and glided down the companion-way into the dim cabin itself, followed by Anna. They groped their way about. The table was still clamped to the floor but other small furniture, worm-eaten and rotting, was pressed by the water against the cabin roof. Mary thought with misgiving of Tom McLeod's words. She was just about to tug at Anna's arm to signal that they would leave the cabin when, by the dim light that filtered through a port-hole she saw the cupboard built into the wall. Its door was still ajar and swayed with the swirl of the water from the motion of their bodies in the cabin. Struck by curiosity, Mary swam to the door and opened it.

It was some kind of a wardrobe, for inside sodden, tattered garments still hung and floated out towards Mary as she opened the door, making her back away in sudden fright. Anna was looking over Mary's shoulder and pointed to the foot of the wardrobe where there lay what appeared to be a box about a foot square. Steadied by Anna, Mary sank lower to investigate. Yes, it was a box, an old metal deed box such as lawyers use, but rusty and encrusted with barnacles. It was not too heavy to lift and Mary brought it into an open space on the cabin floor. Then she pointed to the box and upwards above their heads. Anna understood. Mary wanted to take the box to the surface. She signalled to Anna to lead the way out of the cabin, and clutching the box under her arm, she and Anna took hands, and gliding rather than swimming, they eased their way round the table towards the companion-way. Just as they were beginning to rise Anna tugged hard at Mary's hand and stopped with a jerk. Anna's air-hose had caught on a swaying metal fitment for a cabin lamp, an ugly barnacled hook which was just above their heads. Anna



Anna panicked and gave a terrific jerk at her air-hose

loosened her grip of Mary and tried to free herself, but the more she struggled, the more firmly she seemed hooked. In her fright she thought she had been gripped by some gigantic eel and she fought and struggled harder still. Mary could scarce see what was happening in the murk of that grim cabin, but she dropped the box, which came to rest on the table, and tried to assist Anna.

By now Anna was threshing frantically to get loose. All at once Mary saw what the trouble was, but before she could reach up and free Anna, Anna panicked and, half turning, gave a terrific jerk at her air-hose. The sharp edge of the hook, serrated with barnacles, was embedded in the air-hose and Anna's jerk cut it through. There was a gurgle of bubbles from the hose and Anna was free, but her air supply was gone.

Quickly Mary realized what had happened and seized Anna round the waist and steered her towards the companion-way.

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Then, taking two deep breaths from the mouth-piece of her own aqualung, she took it from her mouth and thrust it against Anna's.

Luckily Anna remembered this method of rescue they had both learned at the Sub-Aqua Club, and although she had already swallowed a mouthful or two of water, she managed to close her lips over the mouthpiece and take two breaths before she handed it back to Mary. As Mary took her two breaths, she kicked gently with her swim-fins and rose up the crumbling stairway, pulling Anna with her. Carefully they skirted the hatchway, each of them taking two breaths in turn from Mary's aqualung, passing the mouthpiece to each other. At last they were on the deck again and free of that eerie cabin. Mary clasped her arm in Anna's and kicked out and swam upwards to reach the surface, pausing only to give Anna another couple of breaths. Another minute and they



Each took two breaths in turn from Mary's mouthpiece.

had broken the surface and were back into the world of blue sky and sunshine. The boat lay a hundred yards away.

"Come on, Anna! Swim for the boat!" Mary took a few strokes but Anna suddenly cried, "Oh, I can't!" and turned sick and faint. In an instant Mary had her by the arm-pits and swam backwards towards the boat. When she reached it, she hung Anna's arms over the stern, then hung on with one hand herself while she supported Anna with the other. "Can you manage to climb in, Anna?" she asked, but Anna had turned chalky white and could only gasp for breath.

"What'll I do now?" Mary asked herself desperately. The island was too rocky and slimy with seaweed to get Anna ashore and she was too heavy for Mary to heave bodily into the boat. The only thing to do was to hang on and hope that Anna would soon revive. It was then Mary heard the welcome sound of another outboard motor.

Round the headland skimmed Andrew Cameron's boat with Donald Dunbeath at the tiller. He brought his boat alongside. "I guessed I should find you here," he shouted gaily, then he saw that Mary was supporting Anna in the water. "What's gone wrong?" he cried.

"Anna's fainted. Oh, thank goodness! She's beginning to come round again," Mary exclaimed as Anna opened her eyes and stared about her.

"Wait! I'll help you," Donald flung off his coat. He was wearing swim-trunks and in another second he was beside them in the water and assisting Anna over the stern of the dinghy. Mary produced a flask of coffee from the stern locker and held a cup of it to Anna's lips. As she sipped it, Anna's colour came back and her limbs ceased to tremble. "Sorry I was so silly," she said.

"That's all right, Anna. You got a terrible fright," Mary told her.

"I must have lost my head," Anna declared.

"What went wrong?" Donald asked them.

In a few words Mary explained and, to her surprise, Donald became tremendously excited.

• • • UNDERWATER ADVENTURE

"Then it really is down there and Tom McLeod was right!" he gasped.

"Do you mean the wreck?" Mary cried.

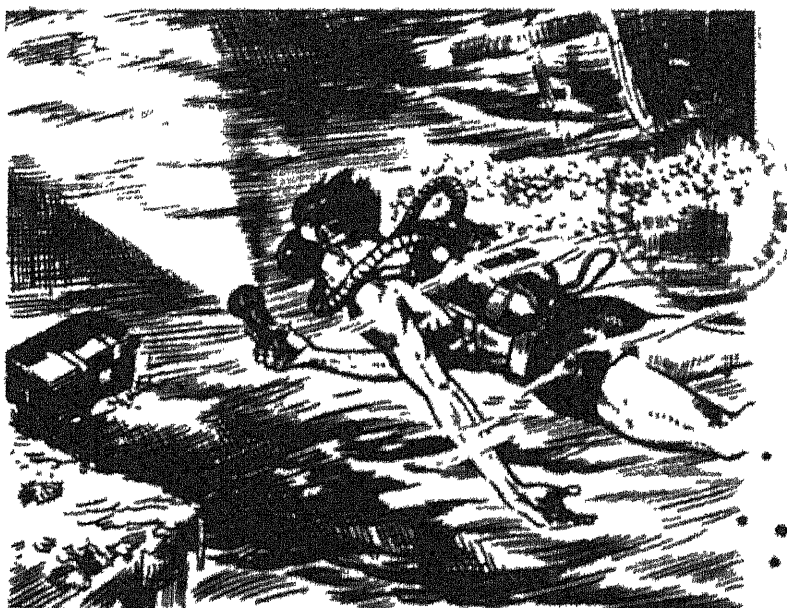
"Yes, the wreck of the *Sunbeam*. It was my great-grandfather's yacht. Tom McLeod told me you'd come to look at it, so I came after you as fast as I could. Can you float?"

"But Tom said you'd gone away to Glasgow!"

"So I did! I took a chance on the old ship to try to swim up to Glasgow and I managed to put on a life preserver and fins. There they are in my boat. I thought they'd be ready for when the replies to my advertisement came in."

"Advertisement?" So you were 'Box 107' who advertised for charts?" Mary cried.

"Why, yes. Then today I asked old Tom McLeod if he knew where the *Sunbeam* had foundered and he grew so excited that he could hardly tell me that you'd already set out



He swung its beam here and there about the cabin.

in search of it half-an-hour before! I tell you, I wasted no time, but got Cameron's boat. What's the *Sunbeam* like down there?" he asked eagerly.

Mary started. "The box! Anna, we've forgotten about it! We found a box, a kind of deed box, Donald, and we were bringing it up when Anna had her accident and I—I dropped it."

"Can you remember where you dropped it, Mary?"

"Somewhere in the cabin. Why?"

For answer Donald leaned over his own boat and took out his aqualung and began to strap it on.

"What are you going to do, Donald?" Mary asked.

"I'm going down to look for that box."

"But you can't go down alone. It isn't safe for one person to go exploring a wreck alone," Mary protested.

"No! Look what might have happened to me," Anna pointed out.

"I'm mighty keen to find that box," Donald said obstinately.

"Wait!" Mary cried, making up her mind. "Let me put on my outfit again. I'll go down with you."

"But aren't you scared after your nasty experience?"

"I'd be more scared to let you go alone," Mary said, adjusting her mask. "It's against Sub-Aqua Club rules."

"That's mighty fine of you, Mary. Right! You lead. I'll follow."

In another minute they were striking down in the direction of the wreck while Anna tried to follow their progress from the boat.

This time Mary did not find it so hard to locate the *Sunbeam* and they slipped through the hatchway and into the cabin. Donald produced an underwater torch and swung its beam here and there about the cabin. They searched the floor but found no trace of the box. Then Mary glided gently upwards and located the swinging lamp-bracket and hook, and pointed downwards from there. Donald shone the torch downwards below them, and there, sitting neatly in the middle



On the lawn in the sunshine they broke open the box.

of the table like a parcel, was the box. Donald snatched it up, and in another minute he had guided Mary safely through the hatchway and out on to the deck and up through the green waters to the shimmering ceiling of sunlight above.

When they got back into the boat, Donald at once tried to open the box. It was locked and rusty, but he inserted his knife between the lid and the box and prised his hardest. The blade broke.

"Wait till we get ashore," he said.

Half an hour later the manse toolbox had furnished a hammer and an old chisel, and they were all three kneeling on the lawn in the sunshine with the box open in front of them. A mouldering damp oilskin packet lay inside. With impatient yet careful fingers Donald peeled off the layers of oilskin. Within were several packets of papers, stained and discoloured by sea-water but the inscriptions on them still read-

able. One packet bore the inscription on the outside, "The last will and testament of Alexander Dunbeath."

"Say! What do you know?" Donald exclaimed. "My great-grandfather's will?"

"Here's a letter that was lying beside it," Mary said. "Do you think you should read that first?"

"It's addressed to somebody. 'To whom it may concern'," Donald read in the faint yet bold hand-writing.

"Whom does it concern more than you?" Anna asked with a laugh.

He broke the seal. There was a single sheet of paper inside. He glanced quickly through it, gave an exclamation, then read it aloud to them:

"In the event of my death I would like a search to be made for the wife of my late son, James Alexander Dunbeath. I understand that she and her son returned to America, but all my efforts have failed to trace them. I would like her to know I have no bitterness towards her now but only sorrow and regret for the mistakes I made. To my grandchild or his descendants I leave all the property of which I die possessed with a hope that some day he or they may search out the places I have loved in the West Highlands and spare a kindly thought for me

Alexander Dunbeath.

At sea, September, 1929."

Donald Dunbeath was silent for a minute, then he said quietly: "I'll do that, Great-grandfather. I'll think kindly of you."

He stowed the letter carefully away; then looked at the skeaf of legal documents. At the bottom of the envelope containing the will was the name of a firm of Glasgow lawyers. "I'll go see these lawyers," he decided. "After all, it's just about thirty years since the *Sunbeam* foundered. The firm may be still in existence. But what's under this packet?"

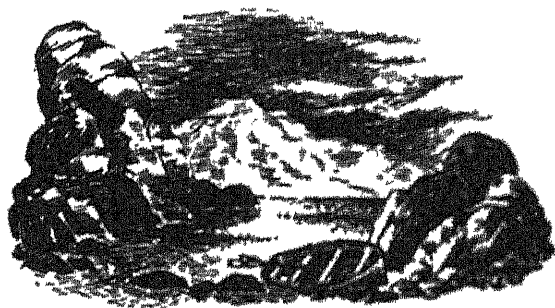
It was a small silver box, black now with sea-water. "Looks mighty like some kind of a trinket box," Donald remarked, fingering the lid. It opened easily. It had once been lined with velvet, now perished, but at the bottom still lay the

tarnished jewels it held. Donald lifted out a chain with a locket in the shape of a heart, set with a pale green stone, a brooch with a single pearl, and a diamond ring with a large emerald.

"I reckon these were Great-grandfather's," he said with a kindly smile. "I wonder what they were figured to do with them?" He seemed to be asking the girls. "But I know what I'm going to do with them. It'll be a treat for you two girls this box might never have been opened. I'm mighty proud if you would each accept a trinket from me. They might not look so bad when they're cleaned up." He put the brooch into Anna's hand and the locket into Mary's.

"But . . . but won't you want to keep them in the family?"—I mean—suppose you get married?" Anna stammered.

Donald gave her a mischievous grin. "I've still got the time, remember. And how do you know I shan't be keeping one of those trinkets in the family yet?" He looked at Mary whose eyes opened wide and she suddenly blushed. "Anyway, I reckon Scotland hasn't seen the last of me by a long chalk," Donald continued. "Those papers look like I might have some kind of property along this coast. And what a wonderful coast it is!" He gazed beyond the Manse garden, beyond the little bay and the jetty and the two fishing boats, to where the Red Isle lay in the middle distance, its rugged outline softened by a great shaft of sunlight.



Pearls and Primroses



CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS

POLICE Officer Margaret Robertson, twenty-four, dark, slim, and well-groomed, better known to her friends of the Special Investigation Branch of Scotland Yard as "Robby," walked briskly back to her office after an interview with the chief of her department.

"Bring the car round, Jill," she told her personal assistant, Policewoman Jill Peters. "We're going out."

"Far? I'm thinking of petrol," queried Jill, fair and blue-eyed.

"Village called Fellsdale, in Sussex."

"What's the drill?"

"The Chief, with plenty on his desk to worry him already, is in a bit of a flap about a story told by a schoolgirl. He wants me to have a word with her and if possible decide if her tale is true or whether she's allowing her imagination to run away with her. He thinks she may talk frankly to me, a woman, after the local constable has rather overawed her."

"I'll get the car. You can give me the gen as we drive down."

In a few minutes the police car was on its way, with Jill at the wheel. "What's all the fuss about?" she inquired, as soon as they were clear of traffic.

"I'm going to see a girl named Prudence Grey. I expect to find her at the school. She's thirteen, so we should be able to get the facts out of her."

"What has she done?"

"Nothing—as far as I know. That's what I'm hoping to find out. It seems that two days ago she rolled up late for school, breathless and somewhat dishevelled. Asked for an explanation she said she'd gone into a wood, which she passes on the way to school, to pick some primroses for her mistress."

"What's wrong with that?"

"She said she had been chased by a man. Frightened, she had hidden in some bushes. That was why she was late."

"That's not an unreasonable excuse."

"It wasn't believed by the Head Mistress, a Miss Rowley, who, apparently, was convinced it was all a yarn to account for the child being late. To make matters worse Prudence was wearing round her neck a string of pearls, or part of a string roughly tied together, presumably one of those cheap things you can get at the chain stores. It appears that Miss Rowley doesn't approve of her pupils wearing that sort of decoration. She took it away and reproved the girl for wasting her pocket money on such rubbish, as she called it."

"What had the girl to say about that?"

"She said she'd found the thing in the wood. For that she was accused of barefaced lying. However, as Prudence would not budge from her story Miss Rowley did at least have the common sense to inform the local police constable about the girl's allegation of having been chased by a man. He went to the wood and had a look round but could see no sign of anybody."

"If he was in uniform he would hardly expect to. Had the man still been there he would have cleared off, or gone into hiding, when the law arrived on the scene."

"If in fact there ever was a man there."

"Don't you believe it?"

"I'm keeping an open mind about it. The upshot of the

whole thing was the girl was punished for being late and lying about it. When she went home, crying, her father, a farmer, naturally asked why the tears. On hearing the story he went off at the deep end. He tore off to the school and I gather there were some hard words. He said his daughter had left home at the usual time. She had never told a lie in her life, and so on and so forth. Miss Rowley said she was running the school, not him. We can imagine the sort of argument that went on. Mr. Grey asked to be shown the necklace, but apparently it had been thrown on one side and couldn't be found."

"And so?"

"That's all. Papa lodged an official complaint, starting on the telephone about police negligence and so on. That's how the case was passed to the Chief. He wants me to have a word with Prudence and sift out the truth. He thinks she may tell me. He's not concerned about the fuss at school; but he feels that this business of the girl being chased by a man should be investigated, because if the same thing happened again, and a girl was hurt, the balloon would go up. The police would come in for the usual criticism in the newspapers. They would say, not without reason, that the story told by Prudence Grey should have been looked into. That's why we're going to Fellsdale."

"Quite right. Prudence might have been telling the truth. These things do happen."

"I'm hoping she'll be at school, but I shall first have a word with Miss Rowley to get an idea of the girl's general character. Then I'll speak to her myself and form my own opinion."

"We're not going to look for the man in the wood?"

"Not likely. That's a job for the local police. All I intend to do is check up on the girl's story, as far as that's possible, to satisfy her father that his complaint hasn't merely been ignored. Then I shall report to the Chief. That's all."

Rather more than an hour later the police car ran to a stop outside the village school.

"You'd better come in with me in case I need a witness of



The police car ran to a stop outside the school.

our conversation," Robby told Jill. "You can form your opinion of the girl at the same time."

"All right."

The school door was opened by one of the junior teachers. Robby, having introduced herself, asked to see the head mistress. This request being granted, the interview took place in her private room. Miss Rowley, a tired-looking grey-haired woman of late middle age, did not look pleased at being interrupted in her work. When Robby announced the purpose of her call she looked even less pleased. I think this is a lot of fuss over nothing," she said stiffly, considering the callers with frank disfavour.

"I hope you may be right; but we have a job to do as well as you, you know," returned Robby, evenly.

"The girl isn't here."

"Why not?"

"She hasn't been to school since the day I had occasion to reprimand her. I assume she's at home. She lives at Five Oaks Farm, about two miles down the road."

"Then I shall have to go there to see her. Why did you speak to her so sharply without first ascertaining the truth or otherwise of her story?"



"I think this is a fuss over nothing," said Miss Rowley.

"It was obviously imagination."

"How can you say obviously? Is she in the habit of making up such stories?"

The mistress hesitated. "No, I must admit she isn't." She shrugged. "Does the story sound convincing to you?"

"I hear a lot of things that are even harder to believe but they sometimes turn out to be true. I'll go and have a word with her. Actually, Miss Rowley, I am not so worried about this particular incident as a possibility that it might be repeated

with more tragic results. By the way, have you the necklace Prudence said she found in the wood?"

"Yes, it's here. It was mislaid under some papers."

"Thank you." Robby took the string of pearls, looked at them closely and then rubbed them gently against her teeth.

Said Miss Rowley: "It's the sort of rubbish that can be bought at all the cheap stores."

"Didn't you notice that each pearl is knotted on separately?"

"I'm afraid I didn't look as closely as that."

Robby smiled faintly. "You wouldn't buy these in a cheap store, Miss Rowley. These happen to be real pearls. Very fine ones, too. The string, when complete, must have cost some thousands of pounds. Only true pearls feel rough between the teeth."

Miss Rowley stared, her face paling. "I didn't know that."

"It rather looks as if one part of Prudence Grey's story was true. She didn't buy these pearls. And if one part is true the rest might well be true."

"Yes. . . . I'm sorry. . . ." stammered the mistress.

"There's no need for you to be upset," went on Robby, quickly. "I realize you have a difficult job to do and I'm sure you acted for the best." She put the pearls in her pocket. "I'll run along now and see Prudence. We may be able to find out where the pearls really came from. Please don't distress yourself. We all make mistakes. Thanks for your help. I'll say goodbye now." She shook hands with the stricken-looking mistress and went out.

As Jill drove to the farm she remarked: "What a jolt for Miss Rowley. I couldn't help feeling sorry for her."

"When one jumps to conclusions they can be wrong."

"Were you surprised to find the pearls were real?"

"I was as shaken as Miss Rowley. Far from expecting anything like that I hadn't even given the possibility a thought. This new slant gives the case a fresh interest. This must be the farm."

Prudence's father was not at home: he was out on the farm. But Prudence was, with her mother.

"Why aren't you at school?" was Robby's first question, when she had stated the object of her visit.

Mrs. Grey answered, "Prudence has been upset since Miss Rowley spoke so unkindly to her. She has been under a cloud. Sit down, miss."

Robby nodded. "I can understand that. But there's no need for her to worry. We'll soon have this thing cleared out, won't we, Prudence? I'm here to help you. To start of all I want you to tell me exactly what happened when you went into the wood to pick primroses."

Prudence, a rather delicate-looking but intelligent girl with frank grey eyes, told a story that was word for word in keeping with her original statement.

"Would you come with me and my friend and show us exactly where you found the necklace?" asked Robby, when she came to the end.

"What about that nasty man?" Prudence was still obviously a little fearful.

"You needn't worry about him. We shall be with you and he won't come near us. What sort of man was he? I mean, did he look like a country worker or a town man?"

"A town man. He was young and wore a blue suit."

"Was he alone?"

"Yes."

"Did he say anything?"

"He came so suddenly he made me jump. He said, 'What are you doing in here?'"

"And what did you do?"

"I dropped my primroses and ran."

"Did he run after you?"

"For a little way. I hid in some bushes. I was frightened."

"Had you ever seen this man before?"

"Never."

Robby got up. "I see. Well, come and show us the place. I have a particular reason for wanting to see it. You don't mind Prue coming with us, Mrs. Grey?"

"Not at all. I know she'll be all right with you."

"That's fine. Come on, Prue. We'll drive to the wood in our car.

It was only about a mile to the wood, a stand of mixed trees with rather a lot of undergrowth, covering perhaps two acres and standing in the middle of open grassland. Having parked the car they all went in and Prudence led the way without hesitation to a spot on the far side where the primroses were particularly fine.

"This is the place," she said, stopping. "Look. There are the primroses I dropped when I ran away. They're dead now."

"Let's see if we can find the rest of the necklace," suggested Robby. "We'll all look. It shouldn't be far away."

Almost at once the search produced a diamond clip of a quality that made Jill gasp. Then two loose pearls came to light among the dead leaves which covered the ground.

"I think this job had better be done properly," decided Robby. "Jill, take the car, phone the Chief and tell him——" She broke off looking at Prudence, from whom there had come a sudden cry. She was pointing at something just out of reach above her head.

There was no need to question what it was. The missing part of the necklace dangled from the crutch of a twig in which it had been caught.

"So now we know how these things got here," said Robby, significantly, reaching up with a stick and unhooking the broken string.

"Do we?" inquired Prudence, looking puzzled.

"Well, as they couldn't have jumped up there they must have come from above."

"A plane?"

"What else? I can't imagine a bird dropping a load of jewellery." As she spoke Robby was moving about slowly, staring up into the branches of the tree immediately above their heads. "Yes, there's the answer," she went on quickly. "There's the thing that brought them down. It looks like a small home-made parachute. There's a sort of a packet, a little white box, still hanging on it. The contents, if there's

anything left in it, should be interesting. The question is, how are we going to get the thing down?"

"If you'll give me a bunk to the bottom branch I'll go up and fetch it," offered Prudence, promptly. "I'm pretty good at tree climbing."

"All right," agreed Robby. "But be careful. Take it slowly."

Having been given a leg up to the lowest branch Prudence went up the tree with the agility of youth. It took her a minute or two to untangle the parachute shrouds which had wrapped themselves around the branch that had arrested its fall. Having succeeded in this she made a bundle of the whole thing and dropped it.

"The story begins to take shape," said Robby, picking it up.

"You think it was dropped from a plane?"

"It's the only possible answer that I can see. Someone didn't want to take these jewels through Customs." While speaking Robby had unwrapped and exposed a white cardboard box. It had been broken, presumably when it had struck a branch. Inside there were some small objects wrapped in tissue paper. There was also a red velvet case, empty, evidently the case that had held the necklace. In gold letters inside the lid was the name of a famous Paris jeweller.

Attention from this was distracted by a noise overhead. It was Prudence, coming down the tree at a speed that could only be described as dangerous.

Robby moved quickly. "Be careful, you silly girl," she cried anxiously. "You'll break your neck."

Prudence jumped into her arms from the bottom bough. Her face was white. "The man," she gasped.

"What man?"

• "The man who ran after me."

"Where is he?"

• "Over there. In the field." Prudence pointed to the fringe of the wood. She gulped. "There are two men."

"All right. Don't get excited. What are they doing?"

"Walking up and down."

"We can guess what they're looking for," put in Jill, grimly.

A black and white woodcut-style illustration depicting a scene in a forest. In the center, a woman wearing a light-colored, belted coat and a matching hat points her right index finger towards a large, gnarled tree trunk on the right. Behind her, a man in a dark uniform with a peaked cap stands looking on. In the foreground, the back of a third person is visible; they are wearing a dark, belted coat and a hat, looking towards the group. The ground is covered with grass and small plants. The background is filled with the intricate, bare branches of trees. The artist's signature, 'J. H. B. 1934', is visible in the bottom right corner.

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It took her a minute or two to disentangle the parachute

"Have you a telephone at your house, Prue?" asked Robby.

"Yes."

"Good. Jill, go back to the car and take Prue home. Ring the Chief. Tell him what we've found and explain the position as it stands. Say I think he'd better send enough men to cover all sides of the wood."

"Why the wood?"

"Because when the men in the field can't find what they're looking for they'll guess what happened to the parachute and come in here."

"What about you?"

"I shall stay here and watch them."

"It'll take some time to get the officers here. The two men may leave."

"I doubt it. Not without what they've come to find."

"Shall I come back to you when I've phoned the office?"

PEARLS AND PRIMROSES

"It might be a good thing. But don't let those men see you. An alternative would be for you to wait on the road for the police car and direct it when it gets here."

"I could do that," offered Prudence. "I'm not afraid any more. Anyway, I'd take jolly good care those two men didn't see me."

"Good girl. All right. Let's leave it like that. Jill, you come back to me in case I need you. Leave the car handy so that if the men in the field did push off we could follow them."

"Okay. Come on, Prue. This way."

Robby waited long enough for them to get clear and then moved cautiously to the edge of the field. The two men were still there, closer in, pacing up and down. She took up a position from which she could watch without being seen.

The field, a pasture, was a large one, embracing perhaps twelve or fourteen acres. There was not a house within sight of it. What had happened was clear. The parachute had been intended to fall on the open field, where, probably, a confederate had been waiting to collect it. The fact that he had failed to do so suggested that the scheme had been operated under cover of darkness. That it had gone wrong was apparently due to one of two reasons. Either the position of the field had been misjudged, or the wind, stronger than had been estimated, had caused the parachute to drift into the wood.

That the men, or one of them, had already made a search in the wood, seemed probable. That was when Prudence, picking primroses, had encountered him; the adventure that had sparked off the whole business. Why the man had deliberately frightened the girl was not so clear. His purpose, reasoned Robby as she watched, may have been no more than to get her out of the way for fear she came upon the jewels by accident. As it happened she had already found the necklace, or part of it, so that what he had really done was defeat his object.

Half-an-hour passed. The men, walking a few yards apart and covering the entire length of the field, had a lot of ground to cover. From time to time they stopped to argue; but always

they worked nearer to the wood, and it was obviously only a question of time before they entered it.

Some time later a soft whistle behind her made Robby turn, and she saw Jill looking for her. A signal brought them together.

"What goes on?" asked Jill.

"They're still at it. They've just come into the wood at the bottom end. When I'm sure they're not going back into the field we'll start and work our way nearer to the road. Did you speak to the Chief?"

"Yes. He's coming down himself. The car should be nearly here by now."

"Where's Prudence?"

"I've put her at the junction with the main road so that she can stop the car when it arrives and confirm that this is the wood. There are others not far away. I can hear a car now, in the distance."

"Those two men will almost certainly have a car not far away."

"We haven't seen one."

"It might be the other side of the field. I think we'd better get back to the road and move along to the top end of the field. From there we should be able to watch both sides of the wood and so see the men should they leave it."

Turning her back to the field Robby set off, picking her way carefully. Jill followed. They had nearly reached the road when suddenly, quite close, a voice spoke. It was a man's voice. It said: "I tell you it must be in the wood. It can't be anywhere else." A twig cracked sharply.

On hearing the voice Robby had of course stopped. But this did not serve. The two men came into sight, alternately looking at the ground and scanning the tangle of interlaced branches over their heads. For a few moments it looked as if they might pass the girls without seeing them. Then one saw them. He stopped and said something in a low voice to his companion.

Seeing there was no point in trying to hide, Robby walked

PEARLS AND PRIMROSES



"Would it be this, by any chance?"

towards them. "Are you looking for something?" she inquired, calmly.

"We are," was the curt reply.

"Would it be this, by any chance?" Robby held out the parachute and the box, now rolled into a tight parcel, which she was carrying.

One of the men almost snatched it from her. "Yes," he snapped, and shaking out the parachute examined the box, which was now empty, the contents having been transferred to Robby's pockets. He swore. "Where did you find this?" he asked, harshly.

"Is it yours?"

"Yes. Of course it's mine."

"In that case you'll have to explain how it came into your possession. We're police officers, and——" Robby got no further.

Both men started to run.

CAPTAIN W. F. JOHNS

Jill's police whistle shrilled, shattering the silence of the quiet wood.

Suddenly there were men everywhere, some in uniform, some in plain clothes. In a few minutes both fugitives were brought in, one of them still carrying the parachute.

Robby's Chief walked up. "All right. Take them away," he ordered. He turned to Robby, smiling. "You seem to have had a busy morning."

"Busier than I expected. Have you seen Prudence Grey?"

"Yes. She's in my car. She brought us along."

"You arrived in nice time. I heard your car and thought you couldn't be far away."

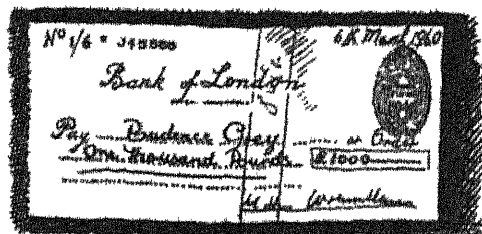
"Show me the stuff you've found."

The jewellery was produced and examined. Said the Chief with a curious smile. "It looks as if Prudence is a lucky girl."

"How so?"

"This swag is the proceeds of a job pulled off in Paris last week. A couple of hours ago the Insurance Company offered a reward of a thousand pounds for information leading to its recovery or the conviction of the criminals. Here's the complete list." The Chief passed a piece of paper.

Robby smiled. "How nice for Prudence. I'll go and tell her the good news. She can help us to look for the rest of the stuff. There should still be a few more pearls among the primroses."





Above the Torrent

VIOLA BAYLEY

ONLY in moments of great emotion did Deirdre still slide down the banisters and this was one of the moments. She gathered up the trail of woollies that had fallen from her arms in the process, pirouetted twice in the hall, retrieved a scarlet jersey from the floor and finally danced her way into the sitting-room.

Her mother sat at the writing-table.

"Mummy, do you realize we shall be half-way there by this time tomorrow?" chanted Deirdre. "Oh, how can you look so calm about it?"

Mrs. Strang smiled up at the flushed, pretty face whose chin was acting as steadier to the pile of clothes in her arms.

"Packing already?" she asked. "Yes, I should take all

your warm jerseys. The mountains can be bitterly cold."

Deirdre deposited her burden in the armchair.

"I still can't believe it's true!" she murmured. "Off to the Haute Savoie! Even the name's so romantic. And the flowers—carpets of gentians. You've promised me carpets of gentians, Mummy. And you and me and Paddy, just the three of us. It's like a dream."

Mrs. Strang hesitated, then slowly unfolded a letter that she was holding.

"I'm afraid this letter is a part of the dream that you won't altogether like," she said slowly. "It's just come from Mrs. Maitland. She heard we were off on this trip and she wants us to take Diana with us. I know we should enjoy it more on our own, but . . ."

"Mummy!" Deirdre stared at her mother in horror. "You simply can't say 'yes'! It'll spoil everything!"

Mrs. Strang laid the letter down.

"How can we possibly refuse?" she asked. "But, Deirdre, need it spoil everything? After all, Paddy is probably bringing that nice friend of his, Mike Miller. Why don't you want Diana to come?"

Deirdre propped her face on her hands: "It's just that, well—she always spoils things. She's older than me. . . ."

"That's not her fault!" said Mrs. Strang, laughing. "Darling, do try to make the best of it. I really can't write to poor Mrs. Maitland and say we're sorry but Diana would spoil everything, now can I?"

"I suppose not." Deirdre's bright face was still clouded.

"All right. But oh, Mummy, if you knew how she always patronized me! I'd rather almost anyone in the world was coming."

- It was still a very aggrieved Deirdre who that evening bent over the suitcase into which she was bestowing all her holiday clothes. She had been looking forward to this Whitsun trip to the Haute Savoie for weeks. A severe attack of pneumonia during the Easter holidays had made the doctor insist on a



She was only two years older but Diana's slim grey suit made Deirdre feel young and untidy.

half-term's convalescence away from school. A fortnight in mountain air was to be the final touch to the convalescence, and Deirdre had proved a model patient in her efforts to grow strong enough to enjoy the trip to the full. Paddy, her beloved and only brother, who was with his regiment in Germany, was to spend his leave with them at Honibel.

And now this bombshell had fallen.

The Maitlands were old friends and there had always been holiday meetings between the two families. Diana was two

years older than Deirdre. She had always had a talent for making small, cutting remarks and for making her victims feel foolish. Paddy, being older, had never suffered. His "Don't be an ass, Di," silenced her. But Deirdre she had snubbed systematically. Towards grown-ups, Diana was beautifully-mannered, therefore it was difficult for Deirdre to explain even to her mother just why the thought of Diana's joining them had caused such a cold douche of dismay.

"It's even worse now she's smart and grown-up," she remarked aloud to ease her feelings.

Deirdre's spirits, however, could never remain for long depressed. When, twenty-four hours later, they were rattling their way across France, her eyes were shining with excitement and she kept up a running flow of conversation, quite undeterred by Diana's small, bored answers, calculated to show how childish she considered Deirdre's raptures. At Dover, where they had met, Diana's slim grey suit and dainty shoes had made Deirdre in her cotton frock and sandals feel very young and untidy. But since that moment, Deirdre had been too absorbed in the journey to notice what was said to her.

But even the most exciting journey can grow wearisome. All three travellers were thankful when, the next morning, at the little valley town of Moutiers they abandoned trains in favour of the bus that was to take them the twenty winding miles up to Honibel.

As they jolted along, slowly ascending, meadows starred with flowers sloped down to the road. They passed through little villages, unbelievably primitive, some with glassless windows, chalet-shaped with ramshackle cowsheds below the living rooms, the only neatness being the exquisitely stacked logs under their tumble-down shelters. Children shouted at the bus, hens scratched and clucked on the road and dogs scratched their fleas with as little respect for the bus's progress as the squawking fowls.

At last the full beauty of the scene was laid before them. The road was following the curve of the hillside, the valley

ABOVE THE TORRENT



The hotel was enchanting, the situation excitingly precarious.

far below them. A cluster of peaks showed at the head of the valley, and on either side, above the stretches of meadow and pine, were more snow-sprinkled peaks.

"It's bliss! It's the most blissful place I've ever seen!" breathed Deirdre, as the bus halted among the cluster of chalets that was Honibel. "And there's our Hotel Belle Vue! Oh, I do hope Paddy arrives soon!"

Her words ended in a little shriek of joy, for she had sighted two sweater-clad figures ensconced on the hotel veranda. A moment later and Deirdre was hugging the blue sweater and greeting him of the brown, for it was her brother Paddy and his friend Mike Miller.

"Thought we'd surprise you, Mother!" cried Paddy. "Caught an earlier train. This place is absolutely the goods, isn't it? Hullo, Di. Nice to see you. Meet Mike. Heart of gold under a rugged exterior."

The hotel was enchanting, the bedrooms beautifully fitted, all of pinewood that smelled of the forest. The whole building seemed to be perched most precariously on the edge of the steep hillside.

"It looks like Charlie Chaplin's cabin in *The Gold Rush*," commented Deirdre, as they sat later eating their *déjeuner* on the veranda. "One more person at the table and the whole hotel will tip down the hill."

"Don't! You're making my beer feel uncomfortable," said Mike. "Paddy, let's go and talk to the patron after lunch. He'll be the boy to tell us all the best walks and climbs round here. Have you done any climbing, Diana?"

"I adore it," said Diana. "I've been several times to Austria."

"Then you'll have to lead the expeditions," said Paddy. "I suppose we shall have to leave the child behind." He pulled one of Deirdre's curls affectionately. "No good coming here to convalesce and then knocking yourself up."

"I'm perfectly well," said Deirdre rather crossly.

Three days sped by, cloudless blue days with a fierce mountain sun that tanned their skin to red or brown accord-

ing to the owner's complexion. The wild flowers were more glorious than even Deirdre's imagination had pictured them, pale globe-flowers, drifts of anemones and pimmulas and everywhere the blue of gentians that stared up through the short, springy grass.

The only cloud on the horizon lay in Deirdre's heart and she was too ashamed to admit the cause even to her mother. This gnawing, uncomfortable feeling that refused to be banished was jealousy. There was no use in denying it to herself.

She was jealous of Diana, jealous of her ease, of the way she could talk about all the things she had seen and done, of how she could make Paddy and Mike listen admiringly to her tales of climbing in Austria. None of this Deirdre would have minded had it not been for Diana's way of treating her. She no longer made unkind remarks. Instead, she treated her with the tolerance she would give a child, a tolerance in which she was always calling the boys' attention to some little untidiness or ignorance on the part of "the child." It sent black wrath through Deirdre who valued the dignity of her fifteen years. But against it she could find no weapon.

On the fourth morning, a particularly black depression settled upon Deirdre.

The others had taken a picnic lunch and were to trek some miles up a further valley, an expedition definitely beyond Deirdre's strength. Mrs. Strang had been obliged to stay in bed with a chill so Deirdre found herself left entirely to her own devices. She sat on the veranda, trying to interest herself in a dilapidated thriller from the hotel lounge but she was in no mood for reading.

At last she ran up to her mother's room.

"I'm going to ask for a picnic lunch too, if you won't be lonely," she said. "I'm just going up these near slopes. Don't worry, I'll go like a snail. I just feel I want to get away and—well, meditate for a bit."

"All right, darling," said Mrs. Strang. There was under-

standing in her glance. "Deirdre, I want you to do something for me. Try to be nice to Diana. Remember, she has always had a difficult time at home. The rest of the family are so clever and good at everything. I think she badly needs a real friend."

"Then she can look somewhere else for one," was Deirdre's ungracious retort.

As Deirdre trudged slowly up the path above the hotel her spirits rose with every step. The roof-tops of Honibel were growing rapidly more toy-like. A toy horse and cart was coming slowly up the road from the valley. Little toy men and women crossed and re-crossed the street. Darting from side to side in search of new treasures for her flower collection, Deirdre found herself singing for sheer joy at having the whole exquisite hillside to herself. Nothing seemed to matter, there, with the cool wind all about her. When eventually she sat down to eat her lunch, she was surprised to find that she had nearly reached the strip of pine trees that grew like a beard round the base of the peaks.

She looked at her watch. She had been climbing for two hours. The valley was no longer visible, only the rival peaks and pine-slopes on its far side.

"Another hour's climb and I'd be up at snow-level," she murmured. "I wonder where the others have got to? I wish I had some more ham sandwiches."

Weary with the heat of the sun and the unaccustomed exercise, she chose a fallen pine for an after-lunch nap, an uncomfortable and knobbly bed but preferable to the spongy wetness of the grass. She fixed a long green leaf under the bridge of her dark glasses to protect her nose from the sun. Smiling at the surprise in store for any passers-by at sight of this begoggled, green-nosed monster from Mars, she lay back, and after a few turns to avoid the worst bumps, fell peacefully asleep.

"Deirdre, what on earth are you doing here?"

ABOVE THE TORRENT

It was Paddy standing over her, shaking her shoulder. Deirdre sat up and yawned.

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" she remarked. "What has brought you to these wild regions? I thought you were miles away."

Paddy's eyes were searching the slopes on either hand.



"Deirdre— what on earth are you doing here?"

"Have you seen Diana?" he asked. "I can't think where she's got to."

"She'd have seen me if she'd come this way," said Deirdre. "P'raps she wouldn't have liked to wake me though. But what's happened? Why have you split up?"

"It was like this. Mike and I were talking to the *patron* last night and he said that if we were coming up the Bornay valley we ought to finish off by climbing round that sort of sugar-loaf at the head. It's not a real climb, no need for ropes or guides or anything. There were only one or two moderately difficult places but we knew Diana had done a lot of climbing

so we thought she'd enjoy it. Well, when we got up the valley and showed her where we were making for, she started being silly and saying we ought to have consulted her. She was jolly rude to both of us. That got us a bit het up so we told her she could jolly well sit there and mind the knapsacks while Mike and I did the climb. After which, and only after which, we'd escort her ladyship home."

"Well?"

"Off we went. It took us only a couple of hours, perfectly easy going except for a bit of rock-climbing over one saddle. When we got back, her ladyship had gone."

"Obviously she got fed up with waiting for you," said Deirdre. "I don't see anything to worry about."

"No." Paddy still sounded uneasy. "Mike has gone down by the path we came up to see if she's at the hotel. I thought I'd come along this way. There are a good many different ways of getting down from that place where we left her. A bit of the upper path is pretty unpleasant, if she chose the one that I came down. Still, if she'd got stuck anywhere up there, I'd have seen her."

"I wonder why she behaved like that?" mused Deirdre. "I should have thought she'd like to show you how well she climbs."

"You don't exactly love Di, do you?" said Paddy with a laugh. "Well, maybe you know her better than we do. She certainly opened our eyes today."

Deirdre tried to smother down the wicked satisfaction that Paddy's words gave her.

"Shall I come down to the hotel with you?" she asked.

"I'd rather you followed. I'm going to take it pretty fast. I tell you what. There's another path down about a mile on from here that would gladden your botanic heart. It's possible Diana went that way so keep a lookout. You can't miss it. It's where the path forks. Don't try the right-hand path. That's the climb I told you of—pretty nasty! Not too tired? Right. See you later." The last words were shouted for Paddy had already set off at a purposeful jog-trot.

Deirdre watched him disappear below the curve of the hill, then turned along the path by which Paddy had come. It wound through the beard of pines to the foot of the great shaggy cliffs and there made its way along without seeming to lose or gain height. However, she must have climbed considerably, for now in every shady crevice there were patches of snow. Her body was beginning to complain bitterly at the distance it was being taken, but the scent of pine and the crispness of the air and the feeling that new views and new wonders might appear round each new corner, made Deirdre disregard all such weakness.

She came at last to the fork, where a delectable small path ambled downwards between drifts of primulas and another path turned abruptly upwards, a track worn by generations of goats that had found for themselves a way up the rocky cliff face.

Deirdre paused. From high above came the sound of rushing water that was echoed again from somewhere ahead. A waterfall? She looked longingly upwards, hesitated, climbed a few steps up the goat-track, found that the going was not too bad, then with a lordly disregard of all injunctions about over-fatigue, she started to scramble higher. Was this the route that Paddy had said was so difficult? Breathless and triumphant she found herself a few minutes later on a narrow plateau.

The turf was still brown, only recently freed from its covering of snow. A carpet of mauve and white crocus had now taken the place of snow. Above the plateau rose far more formidable cliffs, piled one upon another until they were lost in the cap of snow that was the summit.

The roar of water came from under a bridge of snow in the shadow of a narrow gulley. Out from its tunnel thundered and tossed a torrent that flung itself headlong over the rocks, spread itself into a swirl of white as it crossed the plateau, to disappear again, thundering and roaring, over the lower cliff-face.

Deirdre watched, fascinated. There was such strength

behind the melting snow-water. It had a power that was almost frightening. She turned with a little shudder to survey the whole scene. She was now desperately weary. Perhaps there was an easier way down? Ahead lay the precipitous path over the shoulder of the ridge that no doubt Paddy had come by, that he had meant was so unpleasant. She noticed that on the lower shale-covered slopes other goat-tracks showed between the streaks of unmelted snow. But all these tracks ended at the plateau. No, there was nothing for it but to return the way she had come.

She glanced again at the gully where the snow made a tunnel for the torrent. There was a great deal of unmelted snow on this northern face. She raised her eyes to where the steep white slope narrowed and ended in rock. Then she stared and stared again, scarcely believing her senses. Spread-eagled on the snow below the rock was something brightly coloured, scarlet and blue. "Diana!" Deirdre could only gasp the word. But had she shouted it, it would have been useless against the roar of the water.

Deirdre's heart began to thump uncomfortably. There was something desperate in the attitude of that tiny figure so high above her. How on earth had she got there? Why didn't she try to edge her way off that treacherous snow? If she slipped . . . Deirdre began to run over the turf as the sickening thought came to her. What chance would anyone have after falling from that height into that seething rush of water?

She chose the largest goat-track, scrambling as best she could over the loose shale. The track was leading her away from the gully but it was the right track, for here and there, where snow had drifted across it, there were recent foot-marks. The loose stones slid from under Deirdre's feet and fell with an uncomfortable thud on to the slopes below. But worse was to come. The path was rapidly becoming no more than a narrow shelf between the cliffs above and an almost perpendicular wall of rock below.

It took every ounce of courage in Deirdre to tackle that stretch. Had she hesitated she could never have dragged her

weary body, on hands and knees as she was, over the sharp stones and even more perilous drifts of snow, that hid the exact width of the shelf. The torrent sounded close now. There was a hideous moment when she had to rise to her feet to negotiate a leg of rock stretched across the path. Once over the leg she found that the path disappeared under a bulge of snow. Her back to a rock, her body stretched over the bulge of snow lay Diana, her face pinched and terror-stricken.

At Dendie's shout she turned her head. "Are you hurt?" Diana shook her head faintly.

"Why don't you scramble back? You'll get frightfully cold. However long have you been here?"



Spreadeagled on the snow was something brightly coloured.



"The sun is melting it—Di, we've got to move."

Deirdre could see Diana's lips moving but no sound came from them. Without wasting further time, Deirdre began to kick footholds in the snow. Even the cliff-face had been less unpleasant than this. Below the bulge of snow there was nothing but a white slope, steep and shining, that vanished into the rushing water below. Blessing the stout pair of shoes that she was wearing, she made her way cautiously to where Diana lay.

"Deirdre, get me out of this!" Diana's eyes were staring and enormous with fear. "I shall slip and fall!"

"Don't be an ass," said Deirdre cheerfully. "Here, turn towards me. Now use my footholds."

"I can't!"

"Why not?"

"I can't stand heights! I never could! That's why I wouldn't go with the boys."

"But all that climbing you've done. . . ."

"It wasn't true. They always had to leave me behind. Deirdre, I can't move!"

Deirdre hastily thought out the possibilities. Clearly Diana was quite incapable of moving. Should she go back for help? Too long. In her panic Diana might really slip. Sooner or later Paddy would organize a search. He was bound to see them. Luckily there was still plenty of daylight. The hot sun was comforting but the snow was uncomfortably wet as it melted in the heat. Still, there was nothing for it but to wait patiently for help.

"I don't know what you'll think of me," muttered Diana. "You're so friendly, everyone likes you, you never have to pretend. I've always pretended. Sometimes I make myself believe almost that I'm clever and brave but I'm not!"

"Don't worry about all that now," said Deirdre. "But look here, why don't you try to stop pretending? I believe you'd be a terribly nice person if you did. If you'd told Paddy you were scared of that climb, he'd have been sweet about it. You . . ."

"What is it?"—Diana turned her head to see why Deirdre had paused so suddenly.

There was an urgent coaxing note in Deirdre's voice when she spoke again.

"I'm going to blindfold you," she said. "It's what guides do when people get vertigo. Here's my scarf. Turn your head!"

"No, no!"

"You must. We can't stay here."

Deirdre's eyes were fixed on the snow above their heads. Little rivulets were flowing from it. Even as she spoke, the snow moved. A gap of darkness showed between it and the rock above.

"The snow is slipping. The sun is melting it." She gripped Diana's arm. "It may break right away. D'you understand? Di, listen! We've got to move."

"Go without me! Please, please go! I just can't do it."

"All right." Deirdre tried another tack. "If you won't try you won't. But I shall stay and we shall both be killed."

Suddenly she knew she had won. With a gasping sob, Di shut her eyes while Deirdre secured the scarf round her.

Then came moments that Deirdre was never to forget as long as she lived. She dared kick no new footholds for fear of loosening the snow. Her right hand in Diana's, with her left she guided the trembling girl's feet into the original footholds as she herself moved step by step backwards. Perhaps the whole operation lasted no more than five minutes but a century of time seemed to be passing. Once Diana swayed perilously and only by Deirdre's fierce grip and fierce words of command did she right herself. Still, for Deirdre's sake, it was clear that she was trying her utmost.

Every now and then, an ominous sound brought Deirdre's eyes to the tell-tale gap. It was widening rapidly.

"Only a few steps now. That's splendid. Lean to your right." She glanced over her shoulder and her heart seemed to jerk to a standstill. The path was no longer on their level but several feet above them.

"Just a bit quicker." Deirdre tried to keep the panic out of her voice. She must risk the kicking of another foothold or

two. Her arm reached up to grasp the leg of rock that marked the beginning of the path. Oh, to have something solid beneath her feet again! Her fingers found a hold and she pulled herself upwards, her right hand still gripping Diana's.

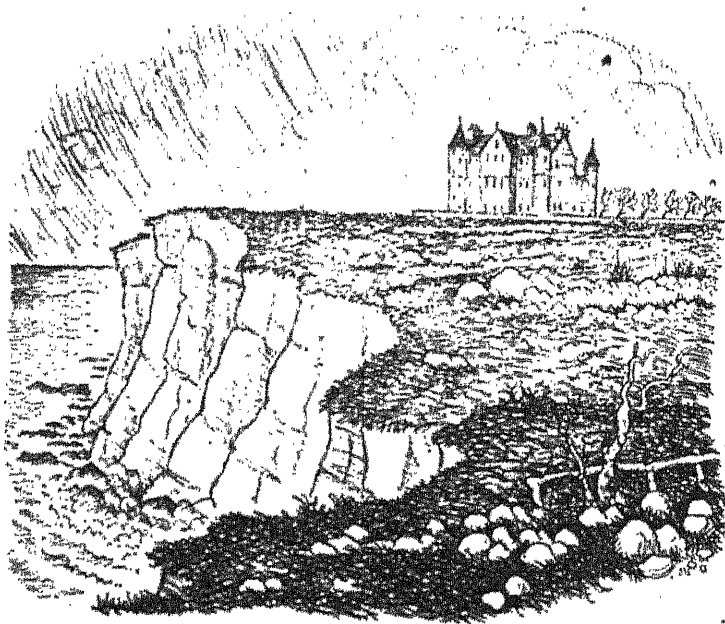
The next moment it happened. There was a flurry of snow, a sound like thunder. The whole weight of Diana seemed to be hanging from her hand. It could not last. Almost thankfully Deirdre thought of the moment when she would be forced to let go of the rock, the agonizing ache would be over and there would be nothing but whiteness and the falling into further whiteness.

And then the ache was gone and yet she was not falling. She was leaning against Paddy's shoulder. Mike knelt beside them, holding Diana's limp figure. Of the great hole of snow there was nothing to be seen but the flurry of whiteness that marked its path down to the torrent.

"I still can't think how you found us so quickly," said Deirdre that evening when Paddy came to visit her. "It's funny, I hardly remember anything about getting back to the hotel. I just found myself here in bed."

"You were pretty well out," Paddy's own face was several degrees paler than normal. "Well, when I got half-way down, I decided I was definitely worried about Di. I turned back and at that junction of paths, I met old Mike. He'd got the wind up too. He'd met a woodcutter who'd assured him nobody had gone down his way. We climbed back on to the plateau. Then we saw snow trickling down that gulley in drabs and drabs. Then we saw you two. We tried to yell but of course you couldn't hear a thing. We guessed the snow might shift. We did a sprint for you that would have wiped the eye of any Olympic champ. Well, we got there—just. Deirdre, we're pretty proud of you, one way and another. Di told us the whole story. Mother has confined her to bed too. She sent you a message. 'Thank Deirdre and tell her I've stopped pretending.' I don't know what she meant by that."

"I do," said Deirdre.



The Secret of Aglish House

MAGDALEN KING-HALL

"IRELAND—at last!" said Fanny Reynolds, clinging to the rail of the packet boat. Across the heaving waves a dim coastline was visible. She spoke too soon. In ten minutes the wind had veered round to the west, and the ship was driven back to Wales.

Five days later Fanny tottered on shore at the Pigeon House, Dublin, hardly caring which side of the Irish Sea she was on, as long as it was dry land.

THE SECRET OF AGLISH HOUSE

But she was fifteen and healthy. A good meal and she was her lively self again, eagerly questioning Mr. Farrell about her cousins the Ronaynes, as the postchaise took them south to County Cork.

Fanny was an orphan. She had been brought up by a grandmother who lived at Bath. An elderly governess, assisted by music and dancing masters, had conducted Fanny's education. For pastimes, she had little parties with her girl friends, played cards with her grandmother in the evening, and went for walks, always accompanied by her governess or a maid. It was not an exciting life for a lively young creature, but Fanny loved her grandmother, and was not discontented.

Then it all came to a sudden end. Her grandmother died, and Fanny found herself alone in the world, except for a family of Irish cousins called Ronayne. Soon a warm invitation arrived from Mrs. Ronayne, urging Fanny to make her home at Aglish House. The offer was accepted by Fanny's legal guardians, and in the early autumn of 1797, she set off for Ireland.

It had been arranged that Mr. Farrell, Mrs. Ronayne's lawyer, should meet Fanny in Dublin, and escort her as far as Youghal. Now, as she pelted him with questions, he said with a dry smile:

"My dear young lady, pray allow me to answer your questions one at a time! Yes, Aglish House is tolerably ancient. It was built early in the last century, and was partly fortified, for in those rude times the English settlers lived in constant fear of being massacred by the native Irish. Indeed I fear that the country is not entirely pacified yet. Its situation, on a wild, rugged headland, overlooking the Atlantic, is picturesque—very—but somewhat exposed for my taste. With regard to the family, Mrs. Ronayne though forgetful to a fault, has a character strongly marked by benevolence. Her son Roderick, aged seventeen, is a fine lad, his sister Katherine, three years younger, is a mild, pleasant girl."

"There is no one else in the family?"

"Yes. Mr. Oliver Ronayne also resides there. He is the late Mr. Ronayne's younger brother."

"And there are horses and dogs?"

Mr. Farrell threw up his eyes disapprovingly: "A world of them!"

Fanny's spirits rose. Young people, horses, dogs, a wild coast and the sea. What could be better?

On the fourth day of their journey, they left the plains of Tipperary behind them, climbed up through the Knockmeal-down Mountains and down through wooded glens to the River Blackwater, and so came to the old town of Youghal, where Fanny and Mr. Farrell parted company, after he had seen her on to the ferry that was to take her across the river to the opposite shore. Here Mrs. Ronayne's carriage awaited her.

It was evening when, after a long drive along the coast, the road led uphill past an ancient round tower and a ruined church to the headland on which Aglish House was situated. From beneath clouds, the light of the setting sun streamed down on to a peacock-blue sea. Then a sudden skiff of rain blotted out sea, sky and distant headlands. When it had passed over, the light had faded into twilight. They were driving up an avenue where the trees were all bent landwards, telling of their ceaseless struggle with the Atlantic gales.

The house came in sight, dark against the pale evening sky, and somehow unwelcoming, even threatening looking, with its curious round towers and small barred windows. Just for a moment Fanny's heart failed her. She longed to be back in Bath with her grandmother. Her eyes filled with tears. But as the carriage drew up before the house, the door burst open and Ronaynes and dogs rushed out to greet her.

Mrs. Ronayne, dressed in a shabby gown, but with her shawl pinned together with a diamond brooch, and with an air of distinction about her handsome features, clasped Fanny in her arms.

"Welcome, welcome, my dear Jenny, to Aglish House!"

"Fanny, mama, Fanny," "Mama can never remember

THE SECRET OF AGLISH HOUSE



"Welcome, welcome, my dear, to Aglish House."

names," said two cheerful voices, and a tall boy and a younger girl introduced themselves. "I am Roderick, but everyone calls me Rory." "And I am Kate, and this is Bouncer—down Bouncer! Chieftain—he is quite gentle though he is so huge, Queen and Queen's new puppies, and Conn and Rover."

"My dear Sally, I trust you like dogs?" murmured Mrs. Ronayne.

"Oh, yes, I dote on them, though we never had any in Bath," Fanny assured her.

She might have added that she thought she was going to

like her cousins too. She was very struck with Rory's good looks—he had thick dark brown hair and very blue eyes—and with his gay expression. To her he seemed quite a young man. Kate was a fair-haired girl with a pretty complexion. She was rather plump. She put her arm round Fanny's waist and said impulsively, "I wish I were as slender as you are Fanny! How do you manage it?" "By not puzzling on potato cakes as you do!" Rory told her with brotherly frankness.

Fanny laughed and blushed. She was in fact rather proud of her small waist. But in a general way she was not vain, though most people found her face with its wide-apart hazel eyes, clear, slightly freckled skin and turned-up nose, very engaging.

A voice with a fruity brogue boomed, "Begob! And is this elegant creature our cousin from across the water? Shüre now, isn't she a sight to gladden tired eyes?"

A thickset man of about forty, with a high colour and protruding eyes, dressed in buckskin breeches and muddy top boots, seized her hand and gave it a smacking kiss.

Rory, seeing Fanny's embarrassment, said rather sharply: "Uncle Noll, stop quizzing Fanny. She is tired after her journey." Later he murmured to Fanny, "Pay no attention to Uncle Noll. He is somewhat too boisterous at times, but when you get to know him, he is the best fellow in the world."

Fanny found much to astonish her at Aglish House. Nothing more unlike her grandmother's sedate and orderly establishment could be imagined. The back premises at Aglish swarmed with barefooted servants, to say nothing of their relations and friends. Yet the house had a neglected look. Dust and cobwebs remained undisturbed; door handles that had come off were never replaced; windows refused to open, or once opened refused to shut; not a bell in the house rang. Meals were invariably late, and Mrs. Ronayne's habit of drifting in and out of the dining-room while they were being served, was not calculated to make her family or the servants punctual.

On the other hand, the food that came out of the dark,

PERIDOT

way that her calf was different. Sometimes it was possible to swear that the slightly bewildered look came into her eyes again as she gazed at the little thing curled in a nest of grass at her feet. But as Aunt Meg said, it was impossible to tell with animals: it was impossible to say what they knew and what they did not know—except, said Uncle Finlay once, “that they know what they need to know; and I wish that that were true of all of us, sometimes.”

If only I could say that we still had Peridot! We loved him so much. But we knew that the time had to come when he would leave us, and forget. In another sense he was that “dear gazelle” of the old poem, and to Ruby as well as to us. He belonged to the high wild places, and we could never keep him from them without cruelty. Only sometimes it is natural, perhaps, for a great lost sadness to come into us, especially to Marigold, when we think of the little shivering form that we held once in our arms.

Late in the year, the deer herd came down from the hills again. We saw the clustered reddish shapes of the hinds against the heather, and sometimes, in the night, we heard the belling of the great stags. Mr. MacPherson had doubled his guards, had organized a group of volunteer “vigilantes” from the neighbouring crofts and farms, and Uncle Finlay and the men went out to take their spells of duty, even little Tom with an air-gun over his shoulder to accord with the men’s big shot-guns. Once, we heard firing and angry voices, and we learned later that a company of poachers had been caught near the very spot in Deer Copse where Peridot’s mother-hind had met her death. And after that there was peace.

By now, Ruby’s foster-child had grown tall. The speckles had gone from his back and his coat was brown and glossy. His suckling days were over, but he still walked out—in dignity now—to the pastures, and grazed contentedly with the big milkers. Yet on occasions he would raise his head, and the large soft eyes would turn towards the hills, and his



In the field was one tall and beautiful young stag.

nostrils would quiver strangely. And we knew, even if we dreaded it, that the morning would come, as we went out with Tom to bring in the cows to the byre, when there would be no slender shape by Ruby's side, no velvet muzzle to nudge at the men's shoulders as they sat to the milking.

And it did come. We wondered, sadly, what Ruby would do—if, again, she would even know. Tom called her as she lingered a little behind the rest of the slow-moving herd swinging through the gate to the farmyard. She hesitated for a moment, her tail twitching. Then she looked round at the empty field behind her, and an instant later came calmly forward, without any other further sign, and passed into the byre with the others. She knew "what she needed to know."

We saw Peridot only once again—at least, we felt certain that it **was him**.

It was after Christmas. There was a sprinkling of snow over

PERIDOT

the pastures, and Uncle Finlay and the men had spread great forkfuls of sweet hay in the fields. Marry and I went out with Tom to bring in the cow herd. Beyond Deer Copse, as we neared the grazing-ground, we saw a few distant straggling hinds on the hillside, for by now most of the deer had gone back to their haunts in the mountains.

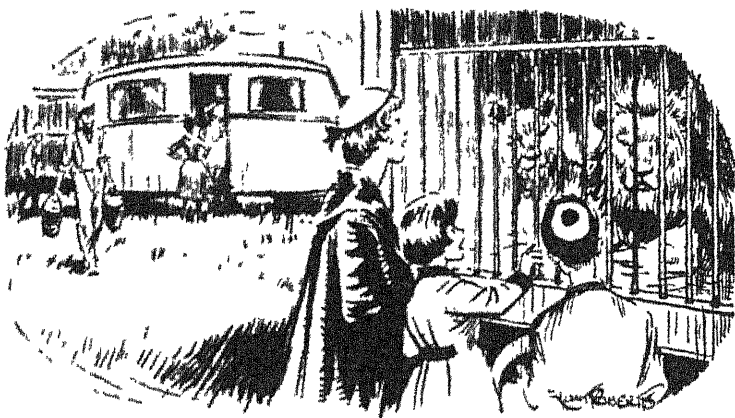
In the field itself was one tall and beautiful young stag, brilliantly outlined against the white of the snow in his greyish-brown winter coat as he nosed at a loose bundle of hay.

"Wait—wait!" whispered Marigold; and we stayed breathless. For Ruby had separated herself from the other cows and was walking warily forward. The stag raised his head, startled—made as if to turn, then hesitated. The two noses touched, the two small clouds of steamy breath intermingled for one brief instant.

"Perry—oh, Perry!" cried Marigold, running forward with her arms outstretched.

The young stag quivered, and again turned his head. He made as if to answer—took one trembling step towards us. His black eyes gleamed with their glint of green: in that one moment, I think, he almost remembered. But then he wheeled and was gone, a shiver of grey speed across the white and over a gap in the crumbling loosestone wall.

Marigold stopped, her arms still upraised, helplessly. But there was nothing to show in all that wide expanse: only the long line of small cloven hoof-prints stretching away from us to freedom, and, even as we watched, filming over with the new-falling flakes.



First Day in the Life of a Lion Trainer

PATRICIA BOURNE

"I SHALL be prepared to pay you twenty pounds a week as a learner if you can arrange to come to Paris, where my winter quarters and menagerie are, and let me see if I can teach you how to train lions and give a good performance with them." The speaker was Mr. Alfred Court, the world-famous wild animal trainer, whose name was known all over Europe for his daring work.

"But supposing I am no good?" I asked.

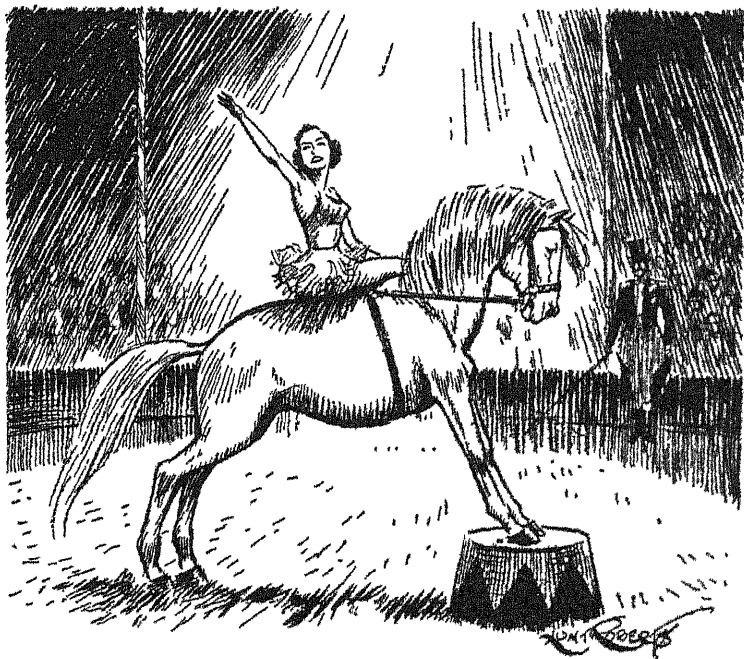
He smiled again. "Then not much time would be wasted, for I think we should discover that within ten seconds of your first entering a lion cage. I shall have to talk with your mother. Could you arrange that tomorrow? Because I leave for Berlin tomorrow night, so I am afraid a decision will have to be made quickly. Perhaps you will discuss it with your family

FIRST DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LION TRAINER

this evening to prepare them. That is, of course, if you yourself are interested."

"Yes, I am," I said. "I'm very interested in your offer."

Needless to say, I telephoned to Mother and she, willing as always to advise and help me, came to the circus to hear what I was so excited about. Now, nobody else in our family had had anything to do with the circus at all. My father had owned a very respectable foreign-import business. He was also a very good sportsman. I was brought up mostly by a doting nanny and seldom spent holidays with my mother and father, but nearly always at Nanny's home in the country near Clitheroe where there was a huge farm next door where my friends and I played "circuses" with the big cart-horses. During my school-days I spent a lot of time on horseback.



From there I had graduated to the Tower Circus.

I got myself into the theatrical business because Daddy died when I was eleven, and, as I got older, I saw it was hard for Mother to cope with everything and meet all expenses.

I think the first shock I gave her was my job in the Blackpool Tower Ballet. From there I had graduated to the Tower Circus. I knew, when I told her about my newest offer, that it was a shock to her. She'd got used to the idea of Colonel Lindsay and his whip-act, in which I was partner, also the riding and swimming I did.

Now here I was, standing in my dressing-room in pale green velvet shorts, satin blouse, a big sombrero hat on my head, ready for my entrance in the ring, begging her to let me go to Paris for a test to become a lion trainer! Sensible as always, she said yes, she would hear Mr. Court's proposition the following day, but that she was horribly afraid of such a dangerous job for me. And what would people say if she agreed to let me have a try?

I argued: "Yes—but, Mother, I'll never be a really brilliant dancer, or a very good bareback rider—and the lions so remind me of Nigger and Tommy at home." They were our two black cats.

She looked at me, and I am sure she thought: "Why can't my daughter get a nice respectable job, something safe and sound?"

The following morning the meeting took place, and after many questions had been discussed, mostly about my safety, I received permission to travel to Paris.

And now, here I was in a gaunt grey building in the Luna Park, Bois de Boulogne, Paris, feeling horribly afraid.

I had put on my riding-jodhpurs and a blue cotton sports-shirt. "Wear something quiet," Mr. Court had warned me. "Something inconspicuous—and not a skirt, unless you want them to try and hook it away from you."

The grooms had just finished putting up the "runway"—a structure of steel bars like a very long winding toast-rack—that linked the lion-wagons with the cage. Down this were to come the animals.

FIRST DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LION TRAINER

The lion-cage itself stood empty, except for five red wooden stools that the lions were to sit on. The Paris day was cold outside, but nothing was so cold as my stomach. I could feel icicles of fear inside me, quivering like chandelier glass, as I stood waiting for my first test in the cage. A test to see if I had courage, will-power, and enough sense to learn to handle the five lions now so peacefully asleep in their big blue-and-white wagons at the side of the cage.

Suddenly one big fellow got up, yawned, showing huge fangs. "All the better to eat you with, my dear," he seemed to say, as he rubbed his sides against the bars of his wagon as an old billy-goat does, sat down again and stared straight ahead.

And I, waiting, thought to myself: "Soon, only too soon, I shall have to go into that big round steel cage and face both you and your pals, with no bars between us at all. How will you look at me then?" And I firmly wished myself back on the other side of the Channel.

Suddenly, Mr. Court was there! I was soon to discover that he had a trick of appearing and disappearing quickly. He was also dressed in riding-breeches and sports-shirt. He looked capable and distinguished.

With a curt "Good morning," he said: "Now, here is a light whip, made of Spanish cane, the only material in the world that makes a proper lion whip."

I took hold of the whip; it was very light.

"Also," said Mr. Court, "you will carry a stick in your left hand, which I want you please to keep in front of you. Ready!" he said to the beast-man.

A long iron bar drew open the doors between the cages, and rising slowly, with bored expressions on their faces, the five lions came padding down the runway and into the big cage. Quietly they were ordered to their particular red stools; obediently they went.

So far it was just like watching any circus-animal act. It didn't seem to be anything to do with me. Then Erik, the groom, was at my side.

"Ready," he said, and it was a command rather than a



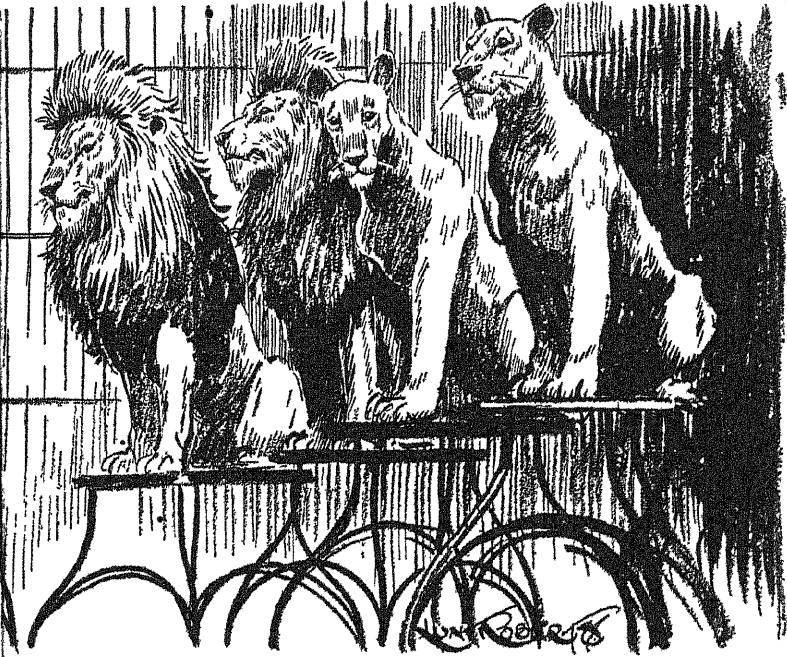
Without more ado I stepped inside the big circular

question, as he untied the rope that loosely bound the door to the cage and Mr. Court beckoned me in. I stepped inside, and heard the door clang to behind me.

"Now," he said quietly, "I should like to say a few words to you, here by the door. It will give the animals a chance to look at you also."

There was a smell of dung and ammonia and I became abruptly aware of five pairs of amber eyes, unwinking, each as big as a penny, staring at me. I had no idea of how tall and tremendous a lion upon its circus-stool is, until I came so close to them. Yet the feeling I had was not of fear. Surprisingly, it was shyness. It was just as though I had blundered into a first-class compartment and was receiving the stares of lorgnetted duchesses and their resentful gentlemen. Disdain—

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circus-cage and heard the door clang to behind me.

remote, cold, aloof, and inhuman—was the message that those yellow jungle-eyes held for me. I shivered, but stood quite still. Court, his eyes never leaving the lions, came closer to me.

“Now,” said my teacher, “if you get into trouble—and only *if*, mark you—turn your whip round and use the handle, or the attacking animal will probably get a claw fast in the lash—and away goes your whip. If any animal attacks you, keep your stick in front of you and give the offender a sharp smack on the nose. If you are lucky then, he will probably turn away after having bitten savagely at your stick. Let him do this. He thinks a stick or whip in a person’s hand is part of that person and that if he bites the stick it’s really you he’s biting; and as that does not seem to hurt you, then he becomes

discouraged. No use cracking a whip at an attacking lion. Might as well poke a straw at a madman."

"Won't it hurt him?" I asked.

"Look," said Court, "a lion has no qualms of conscience. He isn't going to sit up nights, worrying, if he's killed or crippled somebody who's fond of him. But he does understand, if you stay in front of him, who's master. Go forwards, forwards, never backwards, that's your motto. If you're cruel to a lion, he'll hate you. And if he hates you, he'll kill you some day. But even if he likes you, there comes a day when he will try to kill you. Not for any sensible reason that a human could understand; maybe just for a glint of sunlight on your thumbnail, or a whiff of sweat—and even pretty lion trainers must sweat, believe me. Or a breeze in your hair, or the wrong edge to your voice one day when you've got a headache. Or for no reason at all, except he's a lion and you aren't. So, when that day arrives, it's no use saying: 'Lion, remember me, I'm the person who feeds you.' A firm smack on the nose or rear quarters is the only argument he'll understand."

"And that isn't being cruel?" I asked, hesitating.

I was told: "A lioness boxes a cub's ears with a blow that would nearly crush your head. Remember, please, a lion's foreleg weighs almost as much as your entire body, my girl. Lions aren't pussy-cats. And if a lion hits you, you will remember it all your life—if you have any life left."

I thought to myself: "He's putting things very vividly, and I feel an awful fool here, so I'd better do the best I can not to look like one. Also, how the people at St. Anne's would delight in saying: 'I told you so! Of course she's back! We knew she'd never manage that!'"

"Come up close to the side of me," said Court. "We shall go over and talk to them."

We walked slowly together to the lions, who continued to stare—not at him, but at me. One stirred a big paw restlessly.

"Go and tickle their noses gently with your whip," I was told, "and speak to them quietly by name. That first one is the lioness, Zultan."

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Earlier Mr. Court had told me how Miss Violetta d'Argent, a French girl lion trainer who worked for him, had recently been badly mauled by a lioness named Zultan and had lost her nerve.

I did as I was told, thinking, "You're the lady who did not like Violetta d'Argent." Apparently she did not like me either, for she hissed vindictively and took a swing at my whip. What force behind that swing there was! I tried again. I poked her gently on her head and said: "Good girl, Zultan."

She stared down at me, looking as if she had the prim soul of an elderly schoolmistress, which, of course, she had not. Zultan never did learn to like me, although I tried to make her do so. No, her one love was Alfred Court. For him she would roll over and purr.

The next stool was occupied by Belmonte, a huge African lion with a black mane and unusually long face, that made him look aristocratic and melancholy. His eyes were more green than amber and he stared at me curiously, with a sad hauteur.

I reached out hesitantly and tickled his whiskers as you do a cat's. He bared his teeth slowly, lifted open his enormous mouth and grunted: "Ooh-ah." It sounded like a very deep-voiced parson clearing his throat. Somehow, I had a feeling he'd suddenly said something, and I do believe it was an expression of pleasure he made.

Suddenly, there was a disturbance. The small tawny lioness, Sevilla, had sprung from her heavy stool in a cloud of sawdust and seemed to be in mid-air, streaking towards me with claws outstretched. It was at that moment I realized that one must have eyes all over the place.

"Watch the others!" shouted Court.

Now I saw what a good teacher I had, for he placed himself with arms outstretched between me and the attacking lioness, and with a sharp clap of the hands—which is a trick known only to trainers—brought her to an abrupt stop. A sharp noise can often stop an animal when bent on destruction much better than a hit. Otherwise, it probably would have

seen my last moment. A reason no stranger is safe inside a cage of wild animals is the intense curiosity which leads to these quick attacks.

Sevilla glared for a few seconds with malevolent jewel eyes at Mr. Court, then gave me a long, silent glance and walked, with tail swishing, to her stool.

I had expected to be frightened. To my amazement, I discovered that instead of fear all I could feel was anger. I marched straight over to the lioness and said passionately:

"You naughty girl! How dare you!"

I think she felt my anger, and I suddenly had a feeling that these animals were like any others, only a little more dangerous. Show them you are afraid, and they will surely see it and take advantage. I stood right in front of her, looking into her eyes and thinking: "Yes, just you dare try that again, lady!"

And slowly her ears drooped and her big face became hang-dog and she blew down her nose in what was obviously embarrassment. Later, she was to become one of my best show-lions. I did not dare show it, but she looked a darling after her defeat.

I looked round the cage then and saw all the other four pairs of amber eyes were watching me and the faces held up, as if startled. They all looked positively shocked. I thought the big paws of Sevilla were actually trembling.

I did not know then that a lion will sometimes quiver when he is contemplating villainy; also that he never roars when he is angry, but roars when he is hungry or bored; that in a few months I was to see Granada kill another lioness before my eyes, have my leg ripped in Spain, and be forced to stand staring, locked in a battle of wills with another lion named Nero, commanding him to be still, while his claw was actually hooked in my finger.

"Don't forget to pay your respects to Guieto and Granada," said Mr. Court.

As I slowly approached Guieto he showed, I should imagine, every tooth in his mouth, but turned his head from

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side to side as I stroked his whiskers with the butt-end of my whip. Granada sat quite still. She looked a queer character: frightfully clean coat—rather, I thought, like the matron



With a clap of his hands he brought her to a stop.

of a hospital—only the little cap was missing from her head.

After I had, under Mr. Court's instructions, fed each lion with little bits of meat from a pointed stick and talked to them as I was doing so—trying to win their confidence a little—we backed towards the door. Erik opened it just enough for me to squeeze through.

Mr. Court sent my little party of five friends back to their living quarters. Away they scuttled up the runway, glad to be rid of us, also knowing it was nearing lunch time.

"So far, so good," said Mr. Court. "Now comes a rather messier side. Come round the side of the last wagon. Martin," he called to another beast-man, "bring the meat, and lend the lady an overall and the knife."

Martin did as he was told.

I looked on in horror as a huge piece of horse-meat was placed by hooks on the wooden table at the side of the end wagon.

"Put the coat on, take up the knife and let me see if you can cut up five nice big steaks," I was told. "Also, dissect all small bone-splinters."

"How big a steak?" I asked.

"Oh, like this," said Mr. Court, stretching his hands to show the size. "Actually, they eat about fifteen pounds a day each, but we don't weigh, we go on our eye measurement and judgment. The first is for Zultan; she likes all meat. Belmonte likes meat and a bone, so you'll probably need the axe, too."

I felt the grooms were silent, but laughing a little. Well, I'd show them! I took the sharp knife and started to cut. The meat felt very slippery and I admit I did not like holding it one bit.

"You see," said Court, "a lion trainer has many jobs to perform, and many responsibilities, too. It's not as easy as people imagine, to have the training and care of animals, especially wild ones."

I quite believed this when, with a groom's help, I had cut five nice steaks out and they were laid neatly side by side on the scrubbed board. By this time the wagons were swaying with a peculiar rhythm as the hungry family paced back and forth, waiting for lunch to be served.

"Now," said my teacher, "you will take the iron bar and open each little door in front of each wagon in turn. Always see that the safety-chain is in place, so that the door opens only so far and no farther. It's just enough for a groom to get

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the meat through on a fork. And please keep at a distance, or they might swing out and catch your arm instead of the meat."

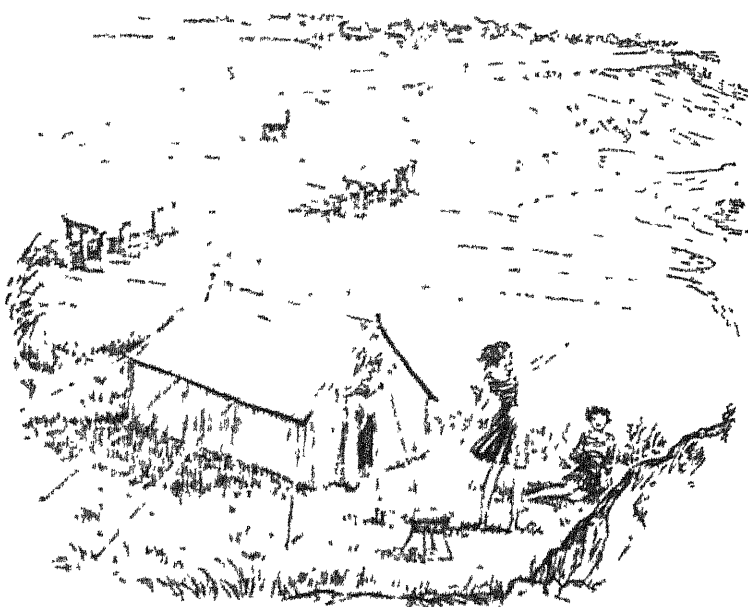
I took the bar with the little crook at the end and we approached the first cage. The rattling inside grew louder, with excitement and anticipation. However, I managed to insert the tip of the bar, as I was shown, into the first door and, on the word "lift," I pushed. The door shot up. At the same second the groom inserted the fork with the meat, which was seized with tremendous force and immediately examined.

It all seemed to go so smoothly that I suddenly had a picture in my head of a first-class dining-car on a very good train and we were the waiters, supplying the diners with their dinner, with the quickest possible service.

Then I waited with great apprehension to hear my fate and was told, "so far, so good," and that this afternoon I should be tried out to see how long it would take me to learn to use a whip in the correct and safe way. I also learnt that, if everything proceeded to plan, I should give my first performance before the public in three weeks' time.

I was so happy I could have hugged my five new friends. Instead, I had to be content watching the grooms putting in the dry clean straw for the night.





The Adventure of the Porridge Pot

HILDA BODEN

"**T**ALKING of chumps," said Patsy, "reminds me that Molly is still in bed. Do we swim without her, or do we wake her up?"

She was standing in her swim suit outside the tent that they had pitched the evening before; in front of her was a strip of short, rough grass, and beyond that was a pebble ridge and the sea.

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"Wake her," said Penny promptly. "Too much sleep is bad for the girl. We could try a wet sponge."

Patsy grinned. "No. Better make it wet seaweed. A nice, squishy bunch of wet seaweed should do the trick."

A sleepy voice came from within the tent

"Don't you dare! I'm allergic to wet seaweed. It makes me wild, and when I'm wild I'm dangerous."

Patsy laughed. "The tide's turned," she called. "It's coming up to the pebble ridge. We ought to swim now if we *are* swimming this morning. Once the sea is over the pebbles we have to wade on them as we go out, and they're shockingly hard on the feet."

There was a loud groan and then a bumping. Then Molly ducked under the tent-flap and stood outside, shivering exaggeratedly.

"The dawn is chilly," she observed. "Also, my tum is more than a little empty. What about some breakfast before we swim?"

"Dawn," said Patsy firmly, "was hours ago. It's eight o'clock, and if we eat before we bathe we'll have to wait for the food to settle down before we go in. Besides, there'll be Penny's porridge ready for us when we come out, so you won't starve."

"I *am* starving," corrected Molly, "and I am doubtful about Penny's porridge. I think it's asking a lot of any porridge to cook itself in a hole in the ground."

"Well, it will have done," said Penny firmly. "It's haybox cookery on a simple scale. That porridge will have been cooking itself ever since I tucked it away all bubbly and hot, last night. There's nothing porridge likes better than a few hours' gentle cooking on its own."

Patsy turned away from the sea and began scrutinizing the stretch of rough grass. "Talking of porridge and underground hayboxes," she observed. "just where *is* this one? I suppose somebody marked it last night?"

"I did," said Molly helpfully. "Penny left it to me after she'd put the turf back on the haybox hole. I used a stick."

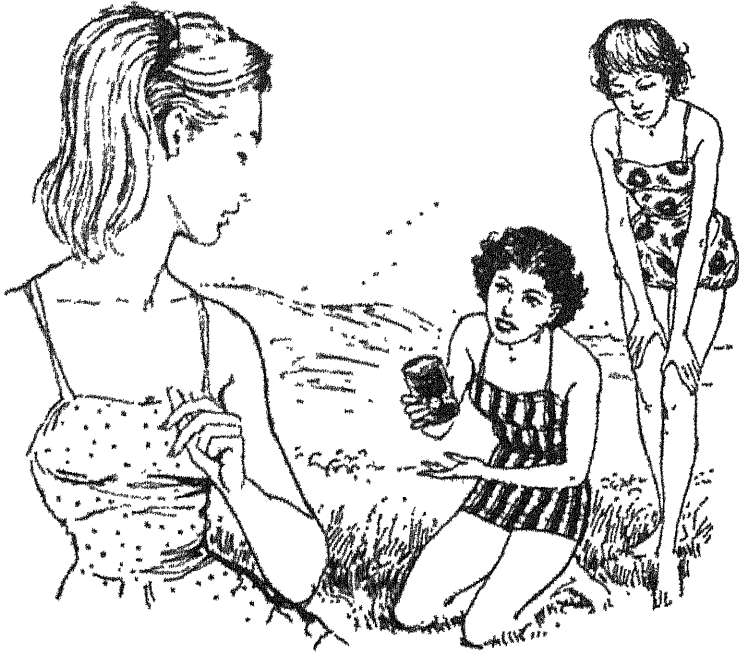
HILDA BODEN

She was interrupted by a howl of dismay.

"Oh, Molly! Oh, you chump! With a piece of stick? When we've a dog about the camp?"

"It doesn't so low that Prinkle would pull up the stick," began Molly, but her tone was doubtful.

"He's playing with a stick now," said Penny, looking



She shook her head—and held up a cocoa tin.

across the field to a terrier pup who was racing madly about.

"One stick looks very like another," said Molly airily. "And even if Prinkle has taken mine, the meadow isn't so very big. We know pretty well where Penny made the haybox. We'll soon find it. Why, we've only to look for the square of turf that she cut out and used for the lid. It'll be easy."

"I hope it will be," said Patsy grimly. "You've no idea what an awful lot of grass there is until we start searching."

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Besides, Penny is rather good at making underground hay-boxes. She prides herself on not messing up the surroundings. It won't be as easy to spot the place as you think."

Penny tapped an impatient foot. "Do we look for the spot at once, or do we have our swim first?"

"Personally," said Molly, "I'm all for finding the porridge first. A nice hot plate of the stuff will be just what we want while we're waiting for bacon and eggs to cook. Always providing, of course, that the porridge is edible when we find it."

Patsy sighed. "Next time you want to make a marker," she advised Molly, "use a few stones from the pebble ridge. There's a lot of them, and Prinkle mightn't take them all away."

They began to search the rough grass around the tents, and the puppy raced over the field and joined in the hunt embarrassingly.

"I wish," said Penny after five minutes, "that I hadn't made the hole quite so far from the tents. It gives us such a lot more searching to do. But I've been brought up to keep the area close to tents free from cooking or other impedimenta and I must have dug this hole further away than I intended."

Molly suddenly plumped down on her knees.

"Thank goodness," she observed. "I began to think we were going to spend all morning looking for that porridge. It's here, Penny. Here's the mark where the turf was cut. I thought there was rather more grass when I stuck in the marker last night, but it was getting dark so I didn't see very well. Or perhaps the grass didn't like being a haybox lid and died off during the night. Or perhaps. . . ." her voice died away.

"Isn't it the porridge?" demanded Patsy.

Molly shook her head silently. She held up a cocoa tin.

"And that wasn't the sort of hole I made," said Penny, coming up to inspect the find. "It's not nearly big enough, and there's no lining and no top pad."

"Perhaps there's something in the tin," said Molly hope-

fully. "Perhaps somebody else had this idea of cooling stuff overnight."

"Not in a cocoa tin," said Penny scornfully.

Molly sat back on her heels and tugged at the lid of the tin. It came away, and she peered inside. Her nose wrinkled with disgust. "Nothing edible," she reported. "Just this."

She pulled out a metal cylinder about three inches long and as thick as a finger.

Patsy took it and turned it round. Penny looked over her shoulder.

"Could be a bomb?" she suggested.

"Who on earth would plant a bomb on our camp site?" said Patsy. "I mean, some people may not love us, but I don't think even Molly's worst friends dislike her as much as that."

"Where would a bomb come from, anyhow?" demanded Molly, taking no notice of this insinuation.

"Naval station," said Patsy promptly. "There's a whopper only four miles inland from the village on the mainland."

"Inland?" repeated Molly, with emphasis.

Patsy nodded. "Yes, inland. It's Fleet Air Arm, and they fly jets. Sometimes they fly out to sea and bomb targets. There's a helicopter that ambles round in case one of the jets finishes up in the drink. But it's all awfully nautical, you know. The 'drome is called a ship and the men all wear naval uniform."

"Still, unless that cocoa tin is a bomb that's fallen rather wide of the target I don't see what your naval station has to do with the cocoa tin," objected Molly. "And what do you think that tube is? Can't you open it? You never know what might be inside. It might be a key to hidden treasure."

"I think it unscrews," said Patsy. Her brown fingers worked at the cylinder and by and by untwisted the top. She poked inside and fished out a roll of thin paper.

"Molly's right," said Penny excitedly. "It is a map."

"I'm not sure," returned Patsy. She stared at the sharp, spidery outlines on the thin paper with knitted brows. "Looks more like a tracing," she added.

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Molly bent over the paper and nodded. "Yes. It's a machine drawing. Dad's an engineer, you know, and I've often seen that sort of thing lying on his desk."

Patsy rolled up the paper tightly and pushed it back in the cube. "Let's not bother about it now. There'll be plenty of time to puzzle it out after we've had our swim. I'll put it in the sleeping tent. Come along. Let's forget about the porridge and the cocoa tin and any other mysteries and get into the water."

She ran back to the tent, tossed the little cylinder inside it, and came back straining her hair into a ponytail. Molly was pulling a rubber cap over her curls. "I wish I didn't have to wear this thing," she said.

"Well, my hair's straight, and getting soaked doesn't make much difference to it. And it *is* far more fun swimming without a cap, so perhaps I'm lucky."

Balancing carefully, they climbed down the bank of pebbles and plunged into the sea. Molly and Penny were much the best swimmers, but Patsy, who, although she loved the sea had never learned to swim really well, pottered around close to the shore. It was a marvellous bathe, but when they finally did leave the water and begin to pick their way back the tide had already covered part of the pebble ridge.

"Isn't there a sandy place where we could swim?" demanded Molly, pulling off the hated bathing cap and rumpling her hair loose.

"This side of the headland is practically all shingle," said Patsy. "There's sand the other side, where it's joined to the village when the tide is low, but swimming there is not too safe. There are bound to be strong currents when the sea sweeps up on two sides at once—the tide comes in awfully quickly across the causeway. Did you notice those platforms on stilts sticking out of the sand every so often? Those are for the benefit of stupid people who get cut off by the tide. There are iron rungs in the posts and you climb up and sit on the platform and admire the sea until it either goes down or an obliging boatman fetches you off."

"I shouldn't exactly fancy sitting too long on a platform," said Molly, as she rubbed herself dry.

"Well, remember what I've told you about the tide. Anyhow, if you were cut off, we'd probably come and rescue you ourselves. We've an old tub pulled up in a cove just to the right of this field, so's we can cross to the village without waiting for the tide, if that suits us any time." Patsy had been chattering gaily, but she stopped abruptly, catching sight of a figure in the distance, and added, "Visitors! What a nuisance!"

Penny peered round the tent wall. "Only one female," she corrected, "and I think perhaps we ought to welcome her. I think she's found -"

"Our porridge!" ended Molly, on a squeak of delight.

She led the race across the meadow to the woman who was standing gazing at a porridge pot unbelievably. She was a thin person with sharp eyes and an abrupt manner, and she looked round as Molly raced up and said: "I didn't know that camping was allowed here."

Molly slowed down, and flushed.

"Patsy Morrel is in charge of our party, and her uncle owns most of the land round here, so I think it's all right."

The stranger nodded grudgingly. "If you say so, I suppose it must be. Camping isn't usual, that's all."

Molly stretched out her hands. "And I think that's part of our camping that you're holding. Penny made some porridge and buried it in a padded hole to cook overnight. We couldn't find it before we went for our swim because our dog took the marker."

"There's a dog?" said the woman swiftly.

Molly jerked her head in the direction of the pup called Prinkle. He was digging up a rabbit-hole energetically.

"Oh, just a small dog," said the woman disparagingly.

"Jolly good one, though," said Penny, who had come up with Pat.

The woman passed the hot porridge pot to Molly, who lifted the lid and sniffed approvingly. "So your dog removed one

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She looked round as Molly raced up.

marker, you tell me," she said. "I wonder if he's moved mine?"

"Yours?" repeated Patsy. "Have you lost something buried, too?"

There was a brisk nod. "Yes. I'm mistress of a Guide company, and I'd arranged a sort of treasure hunt for them. It had to be called off, so I came over early to take the . . . marker . . . away."

Patsy hesitated, and then she beamed. She thrust out her hand. "It's jolly nice to meet you," she said.

The woman shook the proffered hand awkwardly. "You're left-handed, I see," she remarked.

Molly opened her mouth, but Patsy answered first.

"I do some things left-handed," she acknowledged, "and sometimes shaking hands is one of them."

There was a yelp from Molly.

"You idiot, Penny," she moaned, "You've caught me an awful whack on my shin. Jolly lucky you aren't wearing shoes—it's bad enough as it is—your great toe-nail's caught me."

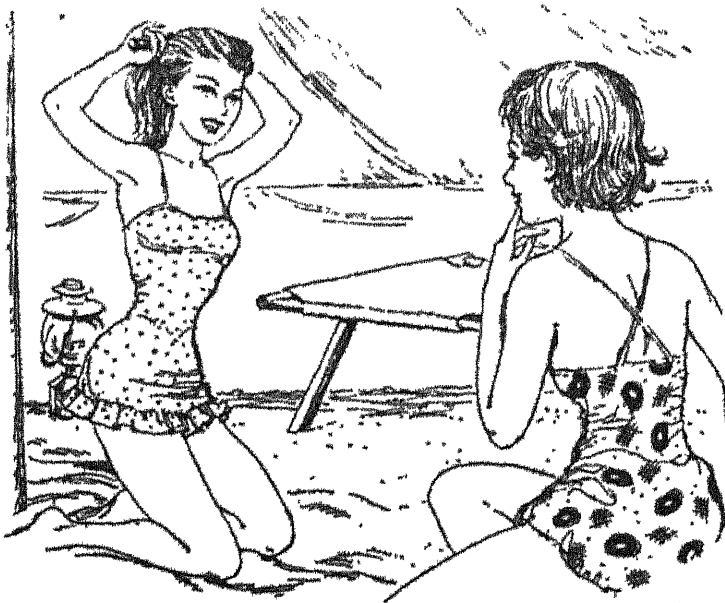
The woman took no notice of this. "I'll tell you what I'm looking for," she said, "because I think I must find it and take it away with me. It could so easily hoax people if it was found by an outsider. It's a cocoa tin. . . ."

"With a little tube in it," put in Molly proudly.

"How do you know that?" The stranger's voice cut like a lash.

Molly hesitated. She observed Patsy staring at her with a fixed, grim expression: Penny was biting her lips. As well as this, she began to remember things.

Then, to her surprise, Patsy struck in. "We found it while



"I'll stick it through the knot on my ponytail."

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we were hunting for our porridge. It must be in the sleeping tent somewhere. Penny, you come along and help me find it."

"I'll help," said the woman swiftly.

"No, you stay here," said Patsy carelessly. "The tent isn't very big and three people would get in one another's way. Leave it to Penny and me. And perhaps you'll stay and eat some of that porridge with us before you go."

Once inside the tent, Patsy let fall the flap. She dived for the brailings on the far side and tugged it loose.

"Guide Mistress my hat!" she muttered. "Mistress! And didn't know that Guides have Captains and shake left-handed when they meet one another. Molly's a chump, too. Of course, she isn't a Guide, but she might have known enough not to talk about that cocoa tin so freely."

"I did give her a jab to stop her," muttered Penny.

"And that woman isn't going to have the diagram out of that tin," said Patsy firmly. "I don't believe she's entitled to it, and she isn't going to get it."

"I don't see how you can stop her," amended Penny. "If we don't find it, she can come into the tent and search for herself. We're not wearing much to hide it."

Patsy nodded. "No. Where can I?" she asked. "I know. I'll stick it through the knot on my ponytail. It's wet, and it will hold." She pushed the little cylinder through the ribbon knot.

"But. . . ." began Penny, very bewildered.

"I'm taking this cylinder to Constable Burns on the mainland," said Patsy. "If he laughs at me, let him laugh. I can take it. But I don't like this Guide Mistress who shakes with her right hand, and I'm getting out under the brailings while you go on searching for that tube. You might go on talking a bit louder after I've gone, so that our lady friend will think there's still two of us in this tent."

She dropped flat on her stomach and wriggled under the brailings. She came out on the side away from Molly and the stranger, and darted for the shelter of a lichened rock. Then, wishing sadly that she had thought to pull on her sandals,

she made her way up the slope towards the far side of the headland. Outside the tent the woman was tapping the ground nervously with one foot. "Your friends are taking a long time finding it," she said to Molly.

"The tent's in rather a shambles," said Molly. "We haven't tidied it since we got up - I say, what's the name of your Guide company?"

"It wouldn't mean anything to you," said the woman.

"I expect not," Molly told her. "It's Patsy who's so keen on Guiding. That's why we've been allowed to camp on our own. She knows just about everything there is to know about it."

The woman smiled, a slow, unpleasant smile.

"So Patsy knows all about Guides," she commented. She held out her left hand and stared at it. "I guess I slipped up there," she added, and crossed to the tent.

Inside the tent, Penny was talking to herself in a clear voice. "Try under Molly's bed," she urged. "We haven't looked there yet, and this thing *must* be somewhere."

Then the tent flap was pushed aside and she was gripped by thin fingers that hurt. "Where's the other girl?" the stranger demanded.

Penny tried to shake herself free. "P'raps she's under the bed," she hazarded.

"Don't be daft," ordered the woman. "If you must be, don't think I am, too. Where's your friend gone?"

Molly heard muffled bumpings inside the tent. She dashed inside herself, collided with the tent pole in the opening, and almost at once the tent subsided in folds of green canvas on top of the three of them.

"Good old Molly!" shouted Penny encouragingly, in a voice much muffled by tentage.

Then somebody outside caught hold of the canvas and held it aside. "Come out," invited a man's voice. "What do you think you're playing at?"

Molly crawled into the open first. "The pole fell down," she said baldly.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE PORRIDGE POI

Penny crawled out, followed by the woman's voice.

"Don't let those girls get away, Bill," it ordered. "They've been up to mischief."

"Better stand still, and no monkey business," warned the man. He waited for the woman to struggle from the tent.

"The kids found the cocoa tin," she said flatly.

The man swore. "And the cylinder?"

"They kidded me they were looking for it, but when I followed into the tent, one girl had vanished." She turned on Penny. "Now then, you. Tell us where's your friend."

"She's taken the cylinder to the police," said Penny. It wasn't worth stalling any more. They were two grown-ups to two girls, and she hoped that the mention of the police would frighten them.

The strangers whipped round and stared up the track that crossed the headland to the causeway. "There she goes!" shouted Bill. "Come along! Leave these two alone. The girl hasn't all that much start of us. We'll catch her yet!"

Patsy looked over her shoulder and saw them start after her. She had not made very good time along the track because there was a furze-thorn in her right foot, but she put on speed and fairly raced down the far side of the headland. Below her was the sandy strip that joined it to the shore, and across the sand she could see the roofs of the village.

The strip was not as wide as it should have been, for the sea was steadily advancing across it from either side. Patsy would have hesitated to cross if she had been on a shopping expedition, but now she did not pause. She raced on to the golden sand and it felt cool to her hot feet.

She had not run very far before the first shallow waves met and covered the path before her. By the time she had passed the first platform the water was halfway to her knees, but she still thought she might make it. She splashed on.

Then a boat nosed gently out from the headland.

It was their own boat, but rowing it was the man called Bill, and directing him was the sharp-faced woman. Patsy's heart fell, but she splashed on.



Patsy's heart fell, but she splashed on.

The tide rose quietly, inexorably. She could no longer run. Behind her, she heard shouting, but she did not look back. At the middle platform the water was round her waist, and she dragged herself up by the iron rungs to the little refuge above. It was still a long way to the village, and she knew she could not swim it. All she could do was to wait.

The tiny cylinder was still in the knot on her ponytail. She tightened the knot and sat watching the tide swell up below her perch.

Steadily the boat drew closer. . . .

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Meanwhile Penny and Molly had followed the strangers in pursuit of Patsy. "There must be something we can do," gasped Penny. "Perhaps we can make a signal."

They did not say anything more until they began to descend the slope at the far side of the headland, and then, far below them, they saw a shining expanse of sea where there should have been yellow sand.

"The tide's *in*!" gasped Molly.

Penny stared across the water. "But Patsy's making it—there she is! Nearing the middle platform. That's Patsy."

Molly let out a deep breath. "Thank goodness for that! I'd never have forgiven myself if she'd been caught—it was all my fault blurting out so much to that woman. Penny, what do you think that paper in the cylinder really is?"

"I can't guess," said Penny truthfully, "but I'm quite sure those two thugs wanted it too badly for it not to be important."

And then they both saw the boat—their own boat!

Penny watched helplessly. "That just about finishes it."

Molly gazed in miserable agreement, and then her face changed. She heard, coming over the sea, the stutter of a distant engine.

"It's the helicopter, Penny. The whirlybird from the naval station. Patsy told us about it . . . we have to make the pilot understand."

They shouted and pointed desperately, and the helicopter came closer and closer until the noise of its engine overhead was deafening and they could see the pilot's cheerful young face looking down at them through the big window of his cab. They waved and beckoned and shouted, and the cheerful grin was replaced by puzzlement. The helicopter sank lower, and then the pilot caught sight of Patsy marooned in the middle of the tide, gestured to them, and turned away.

Patsy saw the helicopter coming. She stood up on her platform and waved wildly. It stuttered slowly up to her and hovered very near. She could see the pilot looking down at

her. Then suddenly, unbelievably, just when all seemed safe, he sketched a gesture of farewell, accelerated, and flew away.

Below, she heard the splash of oars.

"I guess your boy friend in the plane thought we could take you off easier than he could," said the strange woman's mocking voice. "Come along, now. No more silliness. Hand over that cylinder and then we'll take you in the boat and set you safe ashore."

They were very close to the platform. The man rested on his oars and watched her. Patsy took a very deep breath, closed her eyes, and dived into the water on the far side of the platform. She came up spluttering and heard the clunk of oars as the boat was set in motion again.

She swam round the post to the other side. It was no use striking out for the shore, but she might be able to dodge them for a time.

She saw the prow of the dinghy coming towards her, looking huge, and swam back to cling to the post again. This time, though, the strong current caught her and swept her past it. She struggled to keep afloat, and heard the man laugh.

Then there was a leather harness dangling in front of her, and she rested her arms through the loops on it. "Hang on!" yelled a voice above her.

Firmly, slowly, she was drawn up out of the sea, up to an open door set in the side of the helicopter cabin.

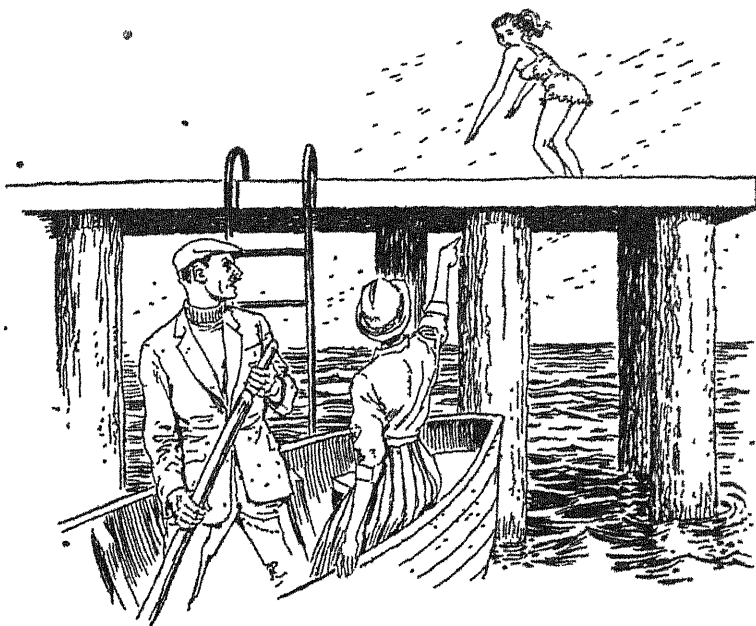
"I gathered you didn't like the look of your rescuers," the pilot said, "and your friends on land did their best to direct me out to you. If it was a joke, it was a poor one, and may get me into trouble. Sit well back while I fly to the 'drome, and tell me all about it."

Patsy tugged the little cylinder out of the knot on her ponytail.

"It's like this," she began. . . .

Late that afternoon a naval launch brought Patsy back to the landing place on the headland. It was towing the dinghy,

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Patsy closed her eyes and dived into the water on the far side.

returned to its owners now that the menacing strangers had been taken off it.

Penny and Molly had been looking out, and came racing down to meet their friend. "Was it a hoax, or wasn't it?" they demanded.

"It was a tracing of a very hush-hush new engine," said Patsy, linking arms with them and starting back to camp. "They almost put down a red carpet for me when they realized what it was. I think—it's only a guess, mind—that the man Bill managed to get it, hid it here, and the woman was to get it away. Well, thanks to Penny's porridge, they didn't."

"It might be 'thanks to Molly's marker'," said Penny thoughtfully.

"I was just the chump," said Molly sadly.

"You thought of the helicopter," Penny corrected. "It was Patsy's only chance."

"And it's great fun riding in a helicopter," put in Patsy. "It almost made up for the scare I got while I was being chased round that safety post. It was a gorgeous ride."

"I bet it was," cried Penny, enviously and sadly.

Patsy laughed. "Cheer up. We're invited to the station tomorrow for a celebration tea, and who knows what may happen? The pilot's a jolly nice bloke -he might give you both a flip."

"Perfect," said Molly.

"Quite perfect," added Penny. "Quite, quite perfect. Now, hurry along, do. I've had a stew simmering in the haybox hole the last four hours, and it ought to be ready to eat. There'll be no trouble finding it. I marked it- with stones-myself."

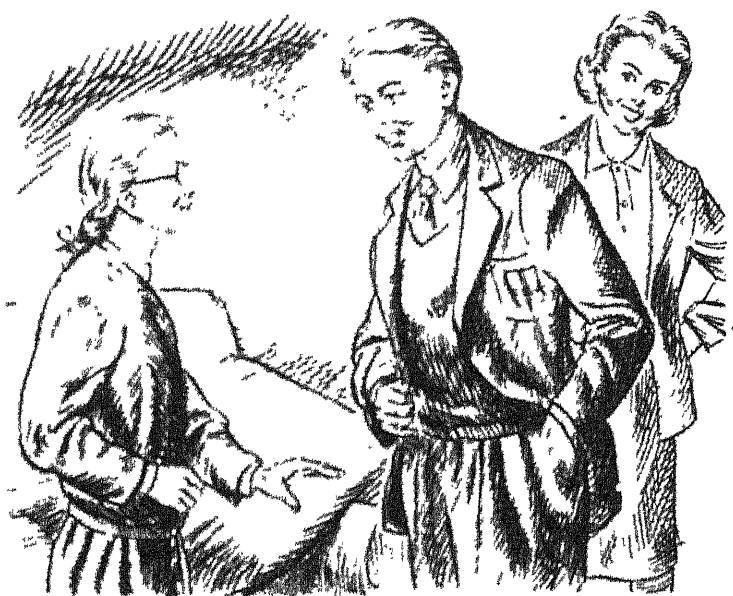


The Man who Loved Pictures

SYLVIA GREEN

IT ALL happened when we were staying at The Hague this summer with Tante Hilly. Of course she isn't our real aunt, just one of Mother's rather peculiar friends, but when she asked us to stay with her in Holland she said to call her that. The trouble is that when we say it we always want to giggle because she's a simply enormous woman, tall as well as stout. In fact as Dan—that's my younger brother who's fifteen—says, "not merely hilly—she's mountainous!" But she's awfully kind and really we like her a lot.

All the same Dan didn't much want to go there at first, while I was frightfully keen. I'm nearly seventeen and I hope to go to art-school next year when I leave school, and I simply couldn't wait to get to the Dutch galleries to see all their marvellous pictures. So I persuaded Dan it wouldn't



Dan rather disliked girls but seemed to take to Anna.

be dull for him, though that was taking a bit of a chance because I knew *he* wouldn't want to spend much time in art galleries. He needed a bit of persuading, but finally we made a bargain.

"I'll come, Claire," he told me, "if you promise that you won't spend *all* day in those potty galleries of yours."

So I promised faithfully I'd do sight-seeing and expeditions in the afternoons if I could have the mornings in the galleries.

It really worked out quite well because we'd hardly got to Tante Hilly's before she whistled in a girl called Anna from next door who was just Dan's age and spoke pretty good English. Dan usually rather loathes girls but he seemed to take to Anna. She was awfully plain, with terrible squinny little pigtails of pale yellow hair and quite thick glasses, but she was a very good sport and I think he really thought of her as just a good chap. Anyway she used to take him off

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sight-seeing in the morning while I was at the art gallery, and in the afternoons we all three used to go on expeditions.

We got around. You can in Holland; it's so small. We saw all sorts of places—Amsterdam, Haarlem, Delft, Leiden, Rotterdam, and so on; and wherever we went you can bet I did not miss the local art gallery. But the place where I spent most of my time was the lovely little Mauritshuis Gallery at The Hague. And that's where it all started.

If you go to a gallery a good deal you soon get to know the "regulars," especially the copyists. There were several of these at the Mauritshuis—rather broken-down elderly men, or earnest arty-looking women, making bad copies of masterpieces. Goodness knows who buys them. Now that you can get really fine reproductions of great pictures, who wants a poor copy? Anyway there they were, dotted about the different rooms, all painting away as busy as beavers. They soon got to know that I was a serious student, not just another tourist, and they'd wish me good-day as I passed. All but one of them, that is. He never lifted his head as I went by. I did not think anything of this at first, but gradually I got the feeling that there was something queer about this man. For one thing he didn't seem to want you to see his work and had his easel turned as much as possible away from the public gaze. All the other copyists seemed quite proud of their work and didn't mind how many people stopped to stare at their pathetic daubs. And there was another thing: though he wasn't there as regularly as the others he was there quite a lot and yet I got the impression from what I could see, that his picture—he was copying a big Rembrandt—never seemed to progress much. He didn't look like the other copyists either; not so old, nor so down-at-heel, though his face was hard with bitter lines on it, and somehow it seemed vaguely familiar to me. However hot it was, he wore a rather military-looking raincoat which he never seemed to take off while he worked—and yet he didn't get any paint on it either—and he kept his hat on, too; a wide-brimmed light felt hat with a rather wide-open-spaces, or cowboy, look about it.



They stood in the doorway and argued. "It's

Perhaps all this sounds as if I'd taken a lot of notice of him but I hadn't really; these are just things that I must have noticed sub-consciously and then remembered afterwards.

Dan and Anna quite often came and fetched me from the gallery when they considered that I'd been mooning about and sketching there long enough. One day about lunch-time I happened to be looking at my favourite picture. It was hung between two bigish pictures in an upstairs room, a tiny masterpiece only a few inches square by Jan Steen of a girl with a loaf of bread. It's so marvellously painted that though the whole loaf is no bigger than your fingernail you can see every pore in the bread. I was just thinking "It's so real that if I put out my hand I could pick it up and



in the train,” concluded Dan emphatically.

cut a doll’s-size slice off it!” when I found Dan and Anna at my elbow, Dan was tugging at my sleeve and hissing something in my ear. I hadn’t really come down to earth as to what it was all about till he had hustled me into the next room. “That man there . . .” he was saying.

“What man, where?”

“Oh, don’t be a clot, Claire! That man painting in there,” and he stabbed a finger in the direction of the room from which we had just come. I remembered then that the mysterious copyist was working in there. “It’s the man in the train!” concluded Dan emphatically.

And then all of a sudden I remembered, too, where I had seen the copyist before. “Gosh, Dan, you’re right! So it is.”

By now Anna was clamouring to know what this was all about, so we had to stop and tell her about a rather queer incident that had happened when we first arrived in Holland. There was a man travelling alone in the carriage next to us in the train that brought us from the Hook of Holland, and he had dropped off the train, on the non-platform side, and sprinted away across the tangle of lines and disappeared among some old carriages on a siding just before the train ran into Rotterdam station. It seemed a queer thing to do—and dangerous at that busy junction—but we supposed he knew his own business best. Perhaps it was a short-cut to his home or something.

"I thought there was something a bit odd about him. He's not like the other copyists," I confessed.

"Perhaps he is a little mad?" suggested Anna.

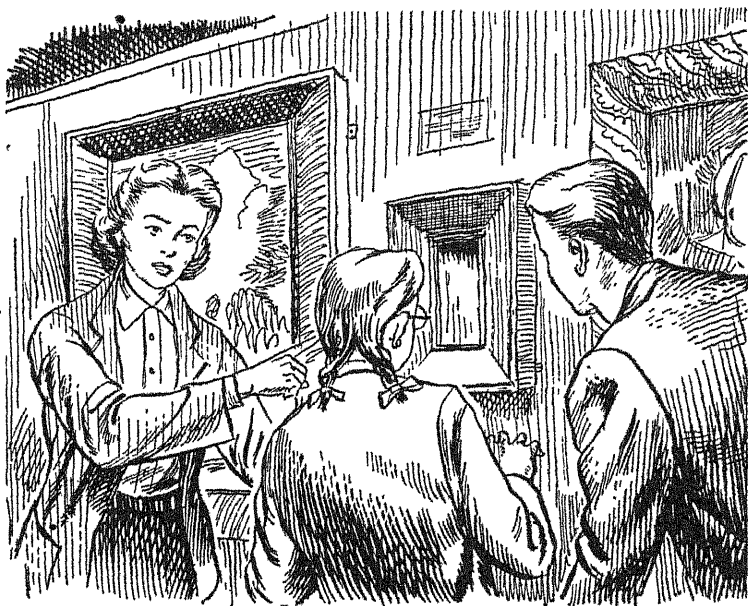
"That goes for all the chumps who sit around painting these old pictures, I should say," put in Dan. "I mean they've been painted once. What does anyone want to paint them again for? Perhaps he's a crook," he added hopefully. "Let's walk back and take another peep at him and see if we think he looks crooked."

So we strolled back into the adjoining room, only to find it empty. The copyist's easel was there, and his stool and paint-box were tidily beside it, but he was not to be seen.

"I say, he's made a quick flit, hasn't he?" queried Dan. "D'you think he can have heard what we said?"

"Oh, no. He's probably just gone to lunch," I said carelessly. At the farther end this room led to the hall at the head of the stairs so to continue along it was our quickest way out, and that meant we should be passing my favourite picture again. I knew I wouldn't be able to enthuse Dan about it, but I couldn't resist showing it to Anna. I asked her if she knew the picture I meant, and she had to admit she didn't, but added—I don't know whether it was just politeness—that she'd like to see it. "It's just here by the window," I began, leading the way. And then I stopped: we were standing right in front of where it should be—and it wasn't there!

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Staring us in the face was the empty frame.

"Why, how funny! They must have come in and taken it out of the frame just while we were talking in the other room," I exclaimed.

"What for?" asked Dan practically.

"Perhaps it wanted cleaning or something," I said vaguely.

"Or they take it for an exhibition," suggested Anna.

"Yes, that's quite likely."

"But then I think they would take all together the frame and the picture," added Anna common-sensically.

A sort of awful premonition went through me as she said this. I stepped hastily up to the frame and examined it. It didn't take me a moment to see the frayed edges of canvas. The picture had been cut from its frame. "Come on!" I cried, and turned and ran for the stairhead to give the alarm.

Everything happened very quickly then. I found two attendants, showed them the empty frame; the alarm bell

rung, the doors were closed so that no one could leave, the curator was fetched, the police arrived.

I think the others were thrilled by all this, but I was nearly in tears. That wonderful little picture was gone and perhaps no one would ever see it again. That was the one thought in my mind. For if a madman had taken it--and it seemed the act of a madman--what was to prevent him destroying it, if that was his mad fancy? "Oh, why don't they *do* something," I groaned, picturing the thief getting further and further away with his haul, while we and the police and everyone hung about for hours shut up in the gallery.

"They *are* doing something, chump!" Dan reassured me. And, of course, they were, but after the first burst of activity it all seemed so fearfully slow and tedious and not getting anywhere. Everyone who had been in the gallery when the doors were closed had first to agree to be searched, and then, as no trace of the picture had been found, everyone had to be questioned by the police. All this took time, and I was not the only impatient person there. Many were the grumbles from tourists at the indignity of being searched and the inconvenience of being kept so long from their luncheon.

When at last it came to our turn to be interviewed by the police we were all falling over ourselves to tell Mr. Pieters, the square, stolid-looking plain-clothesman who questioned us, all about the mysterious copyist. I think we expected him to leap up and say "That's our man!" and dash off on the trail of the criminal, or something melodramatic like that. When he just looked non-committal, and told us to speak slower as he had to translate for the man who was taking down the notes, we felt rather deflated and slapped down. As Dan remarked when we at last got out for a lunch that was so late it was high tea, "Well, that was a bit of a sell. I thought we were going to be right at the hub of a criminal investigation!"

"I do not understand why Mr. Pieters has not thought that this man is the criminal," commented Anna.

"If you think of all that opportunity and motive stuff

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they're always talking about in detective stories—well, he had plenty of opportunity," I said.

"Yes, but we don't know that he had any motive," Dan pointed out.

"If you are mad you don't need a motive," I countered.

Anna struck in, "But is it not possible that another person can have taken the picture while this man sits painting in that room?"

"It's a long room. . . ." I began.

"And his back was nearly turned on the corner where the picture was," finished Dan.

Anna nodded. "That is so. But perhaps also it is that the man has gone to lunch already while we speak in the next room. Then comes the criminal quickly in from the hall to the empty room, and in these minutes before we return he has taken the picture."

"He'd have had to be mighty quick, but I suppose he could just about have done it," agreed Dan, and there for the moment we left it, though we spent most of the rest of the day arguing the thing backwards and forwards without reaching any conclusion.

The next day the theft was in the papers. Nothing was said about any arrest, but we were all so keen to know whether the copyist had been pulled in by the police on suspicion that Dan and Anna came with me to the gallery in the morning. To our disgust, however, we found him sitting there daubing away as usual.

We watched the papers eagerly from day to day, but though there were various articles about the missing picture there was no further news of its whereabouts nor any word of an arrest. After a bit Dan and Anna rather lost interest and it was only I who mourned and fretted for the little lost masterpiece.

But that wasn't the end of it. . . . Two mornings a week Anna had music lessons, and on those days Dan used to ramble off on his own. One such day Dan dashed in to collect me at the gallery earlier than usual and seemed very

impatient to be off somewhere. "Come on, Claire, do!" he urged. "I want to pick up Anna and show you both something before lunch."

"As, for instance, what?" I queried, but he would not say any more.

We took the tram back to the outskirts of The Hague where Tante Hilly lived, collected Anna, and then followed Dan down to the end of the road where open country started, half dunes, half sandy moorland, with groves of small birch trees here and there.

"Wherever are you taking us, Dan?" I asked him.

"You'll see," was all he would say as we hurried through a birch grove and struck out into the more sandy, open dunes that led on in the direction of the coast.

"There's nothing here to see. . . ." began Anna, and then stopped. "You do not take us to those old German place?" she queried.

"As a matter of fact, if you mean dug-outs and what-not, I do."

Anna stopped dead in her tracks. "Then I cannot come," she declared. "My mother has forbidden it."

"Good Lord, why?"

"One of them has fallen in when some children played there. They were much injured and it has taken some hours to dig them out."

"Oh, nix! The one I'm taking you to won't fall in. It's good solid concrete," Dan assured her. "Practically in the 'desirable residence' class, you might say!" Anna stood firm. "Oh, come on, Anna. Don't be stuffy," he urged, jiggling with impatience to get on.

"Also it is said not good people go to these places," she added.

"Well, I don't say you want to go mucking around them alone," conceded Dan. "But with the three of us it's different, isn't it, Claire?" I said it was, and then we both worked on Anna and after a bit, being just as curious as I was to see what Dan had found, she allowed herself to be persuaded.

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Dan's discovery wasn't much at first sight. It was merely a deep shelter, one of several, some of which were wrecked or had their entrances wired up. One or two, however, seemed to be in good condition and still in use, perhaps for store-houses of some sort. The one Dan was interested in seemed to be intact and had a good stout door down a short flight of steps.

"It was unlocked when I came here earlier," Dan exclaimed. "But you've taken so beastly long getting here that I don't suppose for a moment that it still is. I did want you to see what's inside . . ." he said reproachfully trying the door. But he was wrong; it was only closed, not locked. Leaving it open behind us so as to let some light in, we followed Dan down the steps that led on into the interior of the shelter.

The first surprise was that the place was not dank and musty as you'd expect, but seemed well aired. And the second surprise was that it was quite comfortably furnished with a camp-bed, and a table and easy chair, as well as some shelves with pots and crockery on them, and a Primus stove. It was dimly lit, with the only light coming in from the doorway up the stairs, so we did not see the third and greatest surprise till Dan had lit a candle that was on the table and pointed it out to us—a stack of canvases leaning against the wall. We swooped on these; but if we thought we had found a lot of lost masterpieces we were wrong. They were just the kind of bad copies of masterpieces that I had seen so often at the Mauritshuis Gallery. We all looked at one another.

"Now what do you make of all this? What does it add up to?" queried Dan.

"I don't know," I said slowly. So many possibilities were whirling about in my mind that I felt quite dizzy.

"But it's kind of queer, isn't it? . . ." he began. But before he could say any more the sound of someone descending the steps to the shelter door broke upon us. We all swung round feeling guilty and nervous. I don't know whether the others gasped, but I know I did, for standing glaring at us was the

mysterious copyist. He was a tall and commanding figure—one had not realized that, having only seen him crouched on his campstool painting—and there was no doubt that he was very angry. Not just annoyed, but furiously angry. The candle-light shone full up into his face where he stood blocking the bottom of the steps, and I realized with a shiver that, seen thus, it was a dangerous face. His right hand was in his macintosh pocket, and I knew as certainly as I knew anything that it held a gun. I was seriously worried. I felt anything could happen. No one knew where we were. Supposing—supposing he locked us in this place and just left us here. I began to get claustrophobia at the very idea.

He snapped out a question—and I wasn't surprised to hear him speak in a faintly American English. "Just what do you reckon you are doing here? This is private property."

As the eldest I felt I should answer. I started to stammer an apology—only to be cut short by Anna.

In her fluent but stilted English she announced without a tremor: "We apologise to have intruded. Now at once we will go. I hear from outside my father call—and he does not like it to wait." And, with that, she marched so resolutely across the dugout towards the steps that the man almost involuntarily stood aside.

"I say to you good-day," said Anna conclusively as she passed him and swept up the steps. I fell in so hastily behind her that I was almost treading on her heels, and Dan as quickly brought up the rear, though we hardly dared breathe till we were past the man. I know I quite expected his arm to shoot out and bar our progress—if nothing worse; and Dan said afterwards that he had, too.

Whatever the reason, he let us go. Perhaps he really was taken in by Anna's fictitious father waiting for us somewhere outside. Or maybe he had expected some more dangerous intruder when he came into the shelter with his gun at the ready, and when he found we were just kids he thought us not worth bothering about. Or perhaps he was simply in a hurry to get rid of us and get away himself.

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It was a moment that none of us enjoyed.

Anyway, in case he changed his mind, we kept on going jolly fast till we were across the open dunes by the shelters and into the fringe of the birch-grove. There we stopped for a moment to regain our breath, and Dan exclaimed: "Phew! Well, here we are all in one piece, thanks to you, Anna. You were pretty good, I must say!"

"That 'I hear my father call' gag was pure genius!" I added warmly. Anna blushed beautifully at our praise and looked just like a pink sugar rabbit.

We walked on along one of the paths that wound through the birch trees so busy discussing what had happened that we scarcely noticed where we were going. What could it all add up to, we wondered, and put forward wilder and wilder theories, until Dan said sensibly: "Y'know it's probably all perfectly simple. He's either bats or stony, and just fancies living there rent free."

"What was he so het up about then?" I wanted to know.

"His so-beautiful pictures that he paints in the galleries—he fears perhaps for these," suggested Anna scornfully.

"As if anyone would want to nick those!" scoffed Dan, and I had to agree with him. One thing we were all sure was not a theory but a fact—the man had certainly had a gun in his pocket.

"Ha-ha, fancy toting a gun to defend all that old junk!" commented Dan.

"There is perhaps something else he wills to defend. Something we have missed to see," Anna suggested.

I stopped short. "You don't think . . . Oh, no, it couldn't be that . . . the missing picture! . . ." I was quite overcome by this idea and had even half turned to go back again and look when Dan took my arm and tugged me on. "Stop drooling about that silly picture and come on. We want to get clear of the place and then really think all this out," he urged.

But after all we did not have to do much thinking. As we came out of the birch-wood we found that we'd missed our way in it, and instead of coming out by the end of Tante Hilly's road we'd come out near the main road to Amsterdam. We were a bit annoyed as we were all pretty hungry by this time and it meant that much further to walk home to lunch. We turned and began skirting the wood, and coming round a corner we ran slap into that detective man we'd seen at the gallery—Mr. Pieters—who was just about to enter the wood accompanied by a uniformed policeman.

"Oh, so it is my young English friends! And what do you do here?" asked Mr. Pieters, who seemed to speak mostly in questions. But I suppose a detective can't help that.

And then I blurted out: "Oh, I'm glad you're here. We don't know what to think. But we've just seen something so queer. . . ."

"And you would like to tell me about it, please?"

We all said "Yes," with some relief because we really were worried, and Mr. Pieters was not a frightening sort of detective but a rather comfortable, fatherly sort of person. So

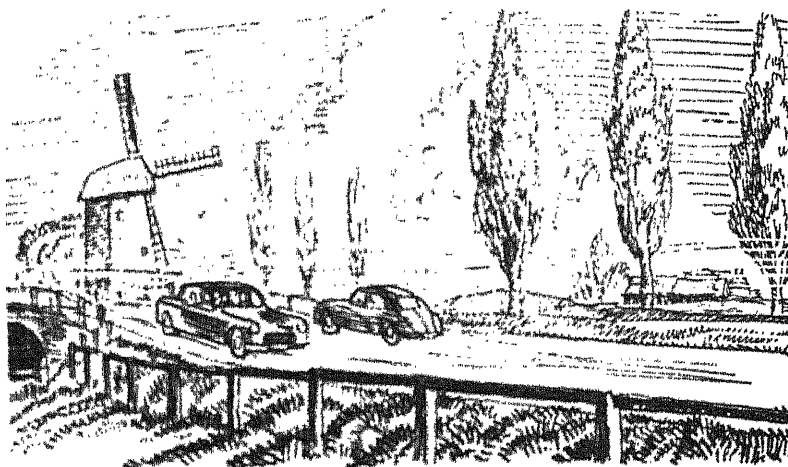
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we began telling him, but we hadn't gone far when Dan exclaimed, "Gosh, there he is!" And we all looked round and there was the mysterious copyist just getting into a grey Mercedes that was parked a few hundred yards away by the roadside. Mr. Pieters yelled to him to stop, and I know he heard because he half turned his head, and then he turned it away again and got into the car and started it up and drove off. And then we were all running like mad to get to Mr. Pieters' car, which was also parked by the roadside, and we all somehow tumbled into it and roared off after him, heading along the road in the direction of Amsterdam.

That was a terrific and terrifying and thrilling chase! His car was more powerful than ours and he had a start so we couldn't catch him, but we hung on to him doggedly, always on the point of losing him and always by some miracle or other catching up with him again. Of course we ought to have been able to have him stopped, but the car radio failed and we couldn't get any signals out, though we could get incoming ones, which was maddening because they weren't of the slightest use to us.

We were all three in a fearful state of excitement and jitters, but Mr. Pieters was frightfully calm. I suppose policemen just have to be. He made us go on and tell him absolutely everything about what had happened at the shelter. He didn't tell us a thing of what he thought or knew, though we were simply longing to know whether he'd suspected the copyist man all along, or, if not, what had put him on his track. It was a funny thing, too, but when I said something about the missing picture, he said, "What?" and then, "Oh, the picture," as if it took him a minute or so to think what I was talking about. Which seemed queer because if he wasn't chasing the man to get back the picture, what was he chasing him for?

Anyway we tore northward along the motor highway until we came to the outskirts of Amsterdam. Mr. Pieters and the uniformed policeman who was driving—he was quite young and was called Hendrick—were sure they'd get their man in the traffic once we were in Amsterdam, but he got away from



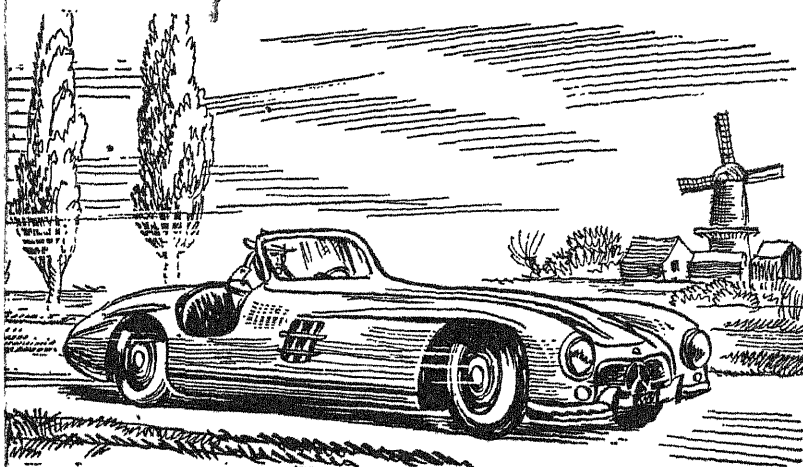
We tore along while the poplars whizzed by,

us every time. I don't know whether it was just luck or whether he was a wizard driver, but he got right through to the centre of the city and finally tore into that big place in front of the station well ahead of us. We got blocked by a tram just at the critical moment, and when we got into the square ourselves there was the Mercedes, stationary and empty, and the man was nowhere to be seen.

There were masses of people milling about and trams going past and blocking the view on this side and that, and it seemed just hopeless to find him now, but Hendrick parked the car alongside the Mercedes and we all tumbled out and started casting about for our quarry.

I think he might have got clear away even then if it hadn't been for his height and that big light-coloured hat of his. Where we'd parked the car was quite close to the quays, and it was Dan who spotted him, or, rather, his hat—he's pretty quick that kid brother of mine—in a bunch of people on one of those cabin-cruisers that take you round the canals which was just drawing away from the quay below us. Dan let out a yell and pointed, and then he was going to dash down the

THE MAN WHO LOVED PICTURES

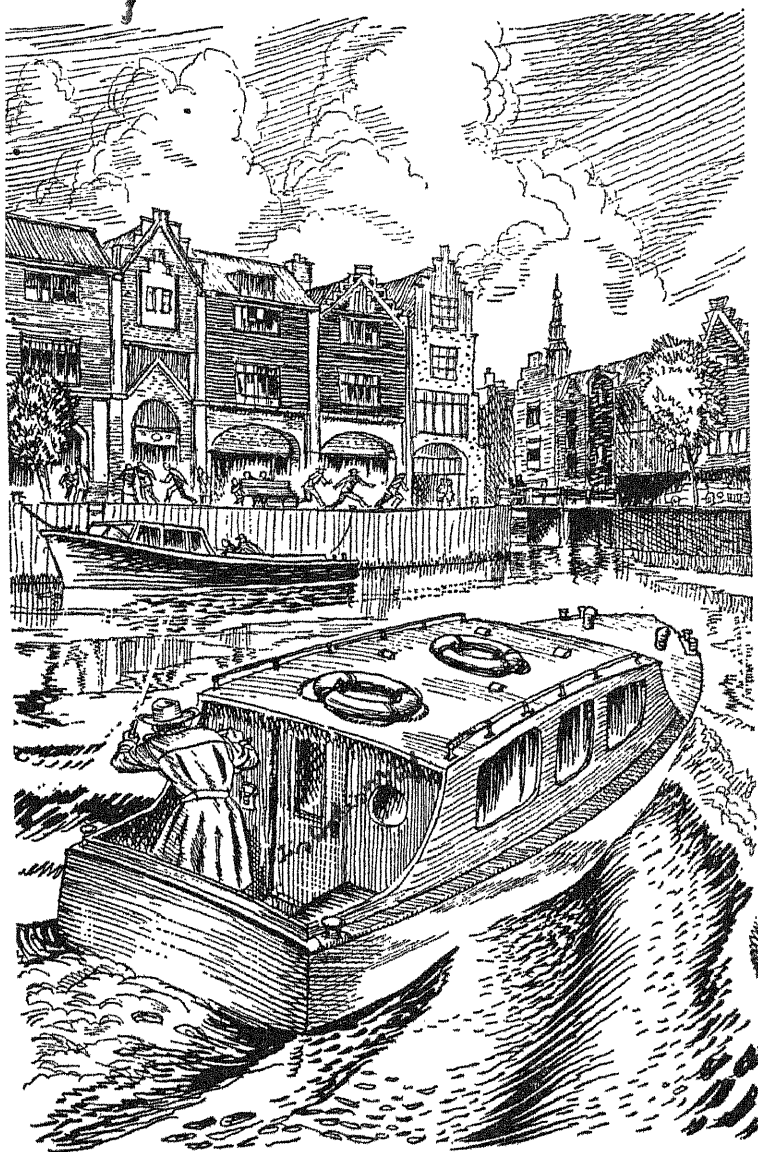


unable to catch him yet keeping him in sight.

steps to the quayside. I think he thought of taking a flying leap on to that boat. But Mr. Pieters grabbed him and shouted, "No—not that way—too late! Along the quays!" And then we all pounded off after him along one of the narrow streets that led off the square alongside a canal. We thought Mr. Pieters was dotty because the cabin-cruiser looked to be heading practically straight out into the basin as if it were going to take the sightseers round the harbour; but Mr. Pieters knew better. As we pounded along the quay we saw the cabin-cruiser turn in a wide sweep and head in again towards the narrow canal alongside which we were running. We realized then Mr. Pieters' strategy. In a few minutes the boat would bring our quarry back to us for it would be chugging along the canal just below us. Then Mr. Pieters, with Hendrick there in uniform as his authority, had only to order the boat to stop; or he might simply drop down the few feet on to the cabin roof from the quay above and make the arrest that way. It all seemed too easy. And then I remembered something: "The gun! Don't forget he's got a gun!" I reminded him breathlessly.

But I needn't have bothered because that was the moment when the man saw he was trapped and started shooting. "Get down, you kids!" roared Mr. Pieters as the first bullets zipped past us. Dan grabbed me by one hand and Anna by the other, and practically pulled us to the ground and into the shelter of one of the quayside seats where several assorted Dutch types had been placidly sitting a moment before. Now they were all on the ground like us. The bench did give us some shelter, and yet it was a sort of grandstand, too, because we could peer through the slats and see what was going on. We could see that the man had control of the boat now. He must have forced the driver into the cabin and shut him in with the passengers, and he'd revved up the engine till the boat was simply tearing along. He must have been pretty strong because he was steering with only one hand and shooting with the other as he came. Of course his shooting was pretty erratic this way so luckily he didn't hit anyone. Luckily, too, like most policemen on the Continent, Hendrick carried a gun, and he began potting back. Just ahead of us was a bridge over the canal and there didn't look to be much room to spare between the central piers between which the boat would have to pass. Then everything got very confused. I don't really know whether the boat crashed into one of the piers and threw the man out so that he bashed his head on the stone and was unconscious and drowned before they could get him out; or whether one of Hendrick's bullets had got him and he was dead before he touched the water. All I know is that there was a terrible crash, and then everyone seemed to be screaming and shouting and running, and Mr. Pieters, and Hendrick, and the people who'd been on the seat, and us, and everyone were helping to pull the passengers up on to the quay from the cabin-roof. The cruiser's nose was almost bashed in and the man had disappeared and someone said he was done for. Hendrick I could see in the water. He'd dived in to try to get the man. I saw him toss something up on to the quay and it fell at my feet. I recognized it at once; it was that broad-brimmed light arty sort of hat that the man

THE MAN WHO LOVED PICTURES



He'd revved up the engine till the boat was tearing along. . .



I could only stammer "Look!" and held it out to him.

had always worn. It was drenched now with water and daubed with green slime from the canal. I don't know what made me do it because I knew the man was dead and I didn't want to touch his hat, but something seemed to force me to pick it up. I turned it over. There was the name of a hat-maker in a place called Big Spring, Texas, on the sweatband inside it. I was fingering the gold letters of this inscription when I felt a bulge as if there was something tucked in behind the sweatband. I slipped my fingers under the band and pulled and out came a little roll of something that looked like canvas. As I pulled it out it came unrolled, and I found myself staring incredulously at the few square inches of that tiny masterpiece, "Girl with a Loaf of Bread." I dropped the hat and let out some sort of queer sound—I think it was as much a sob of relief as anything else—and Dan and Anna turned round pretty smartly from watching the salvage

THE MAN WHO LOVED PICTURES

operations to see what was gnawing me. I could only stammer "Look!" and hold the picture out to them rather helplessly.

"Gosh!" breathed Dan. "Wherever did you find that?" I indicated the hat at my feet.

"So!" Anna exclaimed with satisfaction. "Then he is after all the thief!" I nodded wordlessly and it was they who called Mr. Pieters and showed him my discovery. He didn't seem fearfully excited, or even very pleased. He grabbed up the hat. "What are you doing with this?" he asked quite severely. "Nothing must be touched. I will examine everything that is recovered later."

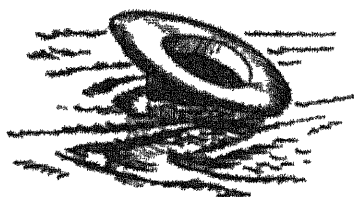
"It was just by me there on the quayside . . . I'm very sorry . . .," I began lamely. But he wasn't paying any attention. Perhaps because I had begun the job, he decided to continue the examination of the hat there and then, and began ripping it apart—sweatband out, and hatband off. And d'you know what he found under the bow of the hatband? A tiny oiled-silk bag holding about a dozen diamonds! We saw them ourselves—a cluster of sparkling, winking brilliants in the sunshine, and worth I don't know how many thousands of pounds.

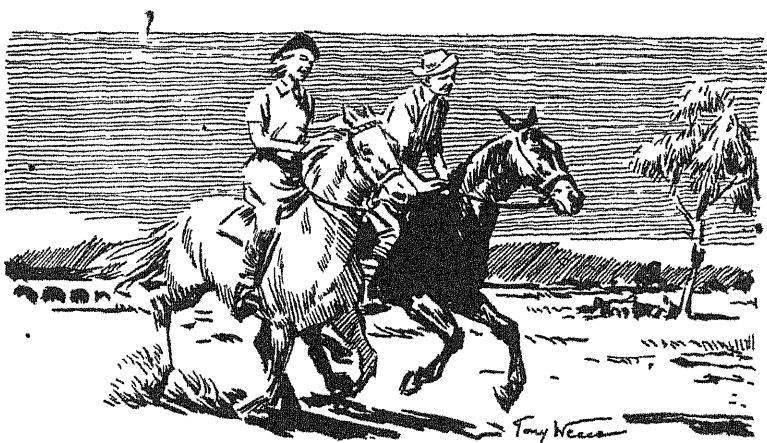
Finding the diamonds seemed to make Mr. Pieters quite cheerful again. To Mr. Pieters, a diamond-thief was evidently something much more important than a man who merely stole masterpieces. He patted us on the back, and congratulated me on finding the picture, and thanked us all for our help. And that was really the end of the adventure, except that we all went back to The Hague very grandly in a police car and Tante Hilly nearly passed out when she saw us drive up escorted by two or three full-sized policemen.

And though I did feel marvellous about the picture being recovered, I suddenly went all shaky and shivery in the night at the thought of that man drowning in that awful muddy, slimy canal water. I've done my first aid so I knew it was only shock, and I knew what should be done for it, too, only in the middle of the night in a strange house you can't have hot bottles, and more blankets, and cups of strong, sweet tea,

But I called to Dan in the next room and he was awake, too, so he came in and sat muffled in an eiderdown on the end of his bed and we talked and talked about it all. And when we'd made it into a story it didn't seem so real. I mean it seemed as if it had happened to someone else and not to us. So we felt better and Dan went back to bed, and we both fell asleep and overslept and were jolly late next morning for "coffee-table" -- which is what the Dutch call breakfast.

We still talk about it but we've never got to the bottom of it and I suppose we never shall. Why did the man steal that picture? A diamond-thief - that's understandable; there's profit in it. But what can you do with a stolen masterpiece that you daren't even *try* to sell? And that's the point at which I always feel a sort of funny, warm fellow-feeling for the mysterious copyist. Maybe he was mad, or maybe he was just wicked, but he wasn't stealing that picture for gain; he was stealing it because he loved it and wanted it. It isn't a thing I'd do myself - but I can understand how he felt.





The Painted Cave

HILARY FIELD

"I DO WISH something would *happen*," I cried. I had had enough of India, and my brother Tim was beginning to feel the same.

"This may be called 'jungle' in Hindustani," he grumbled, "but it's only like a scrubby sort of wood at home."

"You're in the hills," Mum reminded us. "If it wasn't so open, you'd get no riding."

"We can ride in England. I'd like to do something different here."

"Thank goodness you will, soon! Your father's getting his work cleared up in Delhi, and he says he'll get us passages for certain next month."

It was true. Dad is an architect—rather a good one. And for two or three years he'd been supervising the erection of some fine buildings for the city of Delhi. That's how we got to India—a chance in a thousand and we leapt at it. But we'd

had it, and now we were looking forward to those passages home that Dad had promised for next month.

"Just imagine," said Tim. "We have had nearly a year in India and still seen no tigers outside the Calcutta Zoo. I don't know how I'll face the chaps at home. This place *is* a dump. We're stuck up here on the plateau, hardly any people left in the hotel, only Indian films in the village flea-pit ----"

"The trouble with you, son, is pre-monsoon irritability."

"Oh come off it, mother!"

"Nerves. You're all on edge. So's your sister. So's everybody. It's the heat and the close atmosphere. We're all waiting for the monsoon to break. When that happens, and the rains start tumbling down, we shall all feel better."

"It *will* be something fresh happening anyhow," I admitted. We both looked towards the western sky, where the rain would come from, we knew, any day now. The distant peaks stood out jagged against the leaden background. There was neither a wisp of cloud any nearer, nor a puff of breeze to bring one.

Mum gathered up her knitting and rose from her cane chair. "If you want something to do, you'd better come with me."

"Where, Mum?"

"The village school."

"O Lord, that *would* be exciting!" Tim and I exchanged looks. Mum had made friends with the old *munshi*, the headmaster, a dear old man but not terribly thrilling—Tim had once beaten him at chess, Indian rules."

"Are you dying to visit him?" I said. "I'm not."

Mother was unexpectedly firm. "You're both coming," she said from her bedroom doorway. "Mr. Das will be pleased, and so will the children."

"Only if we get 'em a half-holiday," said Tim cynically. He knew as well as I did what made visitors popular in schools.

Mum said that was a grand idea. We must ask Mr. Das for it ourselves. "Goodwill between the Indians and English is terribly important."

THE PAINTED CAVE

"That will make the kids love you, Mum, but will it make Mr. Das?"

"Of course it will, Joan."

We agreed to co-operate—Tim even put on a clean pair of shorts in the kids' honour, and I changed out of my jodhs and slipped on a dress.

"You'll be glad you went," Mum assured us hopefully. And in the end she turned out to be right, though if she'd known just how and why, I reckon her hair would have stood on end.

It was the picture that started it.

Mr. Das was very proud of his art-teaching. All round the walls of the little schoolroom were clay statuettes the kids had modelled, and paintings they had done on drawing-paper. Daubs, some of them, but a few were really good.

And one in particular. It was different. It wasn't like all the others, a village scene at the well or in the bazaar. It was a battle scene, people fighting with bows and arrows, more like Africans than Indians. The perspective was all queer, but the figures had a tremendous life about them.

I liked it and what was more I'd a funny feeling that I'd seen this before, somewhere—or something very like it. In fact I up and said so.

Mr. Das called out the boy who'd done it. He was a wild-looking little chap, darker-skinned than most of the others. Mr. Das questioned him, and then turned to us.

"He certainly didn't get the idea from a book. Actually this boy has only recently come to our school—" Mr. Das lowered his voice—"he's an aboriginal from one of the Korkus villages out in the jungle."

Mum said: "How interesting!" She had told us about the aboriginals—the people who dated right back, B.C. something, before the real Indians came. This was one of the few districts where they still lived on, keeping very much to their old ways.

"Do they still use bows and arrows?" I asked, thinking of the picture he had made.

"Oh, no." Mr. Das nodded his head, as Indians do when

they mean "no." (I never quite got used to this!) "The boy says he once saw men like this in a cave. I am puzzled. I'm afraid, Mrs. Gordon, he's not very truthful—he is, as we say, romancing. The Korkus hunt with traps, or an old gun if they can get one, not with bows."

"I'd love to see one of their villages in the jungle," I said. "Are they far?"

Mr. Das nodded again. "No. Rori Ghat, where this boy comes from, is only seven miles. But it is forbidden to visit them."

"Forbidden?" said Tim, and I saw a familiar glint in his eye. "Whatever for?"

"The Government takes great care of these primitive people," he explained. "They don't take easily to civilization, so it is best to leave them undisturbed. In many ways they are living still in the Stone Age. Government doctors and officials go to see them sometimes, but ordinary visitors are not encouraged."

"Quite right, too," said Mum. "Much as I'd like to see their village, they don't want a lot of sightseers."

"We're not—" I began, but caught a look from Tim and swallowed the rest of my indignation.

As soon as we got back to the hotel I called my brother aside. I felt bursting with excitement.

"What's biting you?" he asked.

"Those men fighting with bows and arrows—as soon as Mr. Das mentioned the Stone Age, I knew where I'd seen something like them before. *In a history book at school. Prehistoric cave paintings in the Pyrenees!*"

He looked at me blankly. Then the penny dropped. "The Korku boy said he had seen men like that in a cave. Mr. Das thought he meant real men. Actually the kid meant picture-men—painting on rocks. That's where he got the bows and arrows—he was drawing from memory what he had seen!"

"Golly!" said Tim. "If your idea's right, it means that somewhere near this village of Rori Ghat there's a cave with——"

THE PAINTED CAVE



Mr. Das called out the boy who'd drawn it.

"Cave-man paintings! Tim, it might be a terrifically important find."

"I'll say it might."

In my mind's eye I saw headlines suddenly. *The Gordon Discoveries . . . British Children's Unique Find in Central India . . .* Should we get medals, or be made honorary Fellows of the Royal Historical Society, or what?"

Tim was speaking: "Joan my girl, we're going to Rori Ghat."

"You bet we are," I said. "Tomorrow?"

"Mustn't waste a day. The rains may break any time now, and Mum would think it a bit queer if we went on a picnic then."

"And we can't tell her," I said. "because" it would mean getting a permit to go to the village, and we'd look such fools if we couldn't find the cave, and . . ."

"And it wouldn't be our find anyhow—the grown-ups would have taken over, and they'd hog all the credit."

"How right you are!"

"Oh, do stop saying that, Joan!" (I'm afraid my brother's manners are not all that one could wish for . . .)

Luckily the rain seemed no nearer in the morning. Mum felt lazy and washed-out, she said. An all-day picnic with the ponies, if we really felt so energetic, struck her as a good idea. It might be our last chance before the weather broke.

"Do be careful of snakes," she said. "Remember, never step into thick undergrowth or beds of dead leaves, unless you poke a stick ahead of you. And don't drink any water however clean it looks."

We promised to take our water-bottles. We didn't mention that we were also taking our torches and a length of cord which we felt might come in handy.

It was easy to find the way to Rori Ghat, because it was marked on a big local map which hung in the hotel lounge. We went so far along the road to Nicholson Falls, which we'd been to on a previous picnic, and then struck off to the left along a clearly marked trail.

As I've said, it isn't real jungle up in those hills. The trees are mostly small and they stand well apart, except in the clefts and gorges. You never see anything but monkeys—there *are* panthers, but they never come out in the day-time and the only one we ever saw was dead. So it never crossed our minds that there could be any danger in the trip. I did say to Tim that I hoped the aborigines would be all right.

"Anyhow," said Tim, "they won't be cannibals, if that's what you mean." We'd been told, in fact, that the Korkus were simple, kindly folk, rather shy and quite harmless.

THE PAINTED CAVE

The trail dipped down over the lip of the plateau, winding through a rocky gorge where we had to dismount and lead the ponies. Then we came out into an open valley, and looked down on the village, a cluster of sorry shacks in the middle of little fields which reminded me of allotments at home.

There was tremendous excitement when we arrived. People



The moment Tim showed his sketch the Korkus burst into talk.

swarmed out to meet us. They even brought a charpoy—that's a wooden bedstead with plaited ropes (very comfortable)—and planted it in the shade of a great banyan tree, so we could sit down. I think they thought we were quite a lot older than we were, and treated us like Government officials. Maybe they were just polite!

The trouble was, none of them spoke English, and the Hindustani we knew meant very little to them.

“I know, Tim,” I said. “Draw them a picture.” (Tim’s

supposed to be the artist of the family.) So he pulled out a pencil and paper and sketched, as well as he could remember, the battle scene Mr. Das had shown us.

It rang a bell all right. You never heard such a jabbering as that simple little sketch let loose. Dozens of skinny arms were brandished, dozens of bony fingers pointed the way still farther down the valley.

"We're on to something all right," said Tim.

"Looks like it," I agreed. I looked at the sky. "I hope the rain won't come now."

"We could shelter in one of their huts."

"That's what I'm afraid of." I wrinkled up my nose. "I think I'd prefer the cave if we can find it in time."

Half a dozen of the Korkus led the way. After half a mile we came to a water-course, dried up except for a few puddles though it must have been a fair-sized torrent part of the year.



The holy man held up his arm and we stopped.

THE PAINTED CAVE

The sandstone precipices closed in again at this lower end of the valley until it was practically a gorge.

Suddenly our guides stopped and would go no farther—even for money. "I don't altogether like this," I said. "It's getting so dark. . . ."

But Tim was being masculine. "Rubbish! It's only the height of the cliffs. It's quite early—only a quarter to one."

A moment later he said: "What was that?"

I heard it too. A long, low, menacing rumble. For a moment I admit I felt a shiver down my spine—this rocky gorge was a creepy place, and the Korkus were quaint little chaps, like gnomes. Then I realized that the noise was only thunder, miles and miles away, and said so. Tim looked relieved!

As the men wouldn't come any farther, we went on alone. It wasn't a place where you could possibly lose your way. There was just one path, high above the dried water-course, and sheer cliffs rising on either side.

Suddenly there was a cry in front. That pulled us up short. It was a weird cry, and the echoes made it weirder. We hadn't imagined there could be any one farther down the gorge.

"Look," I said, "we're coming to one of those holy places." I pointed to a tiny shrine beside the path, just a crude figure with a pathetic heap of offerings in front of it, bits of coconut shell and some withered flowers.

"And here's the holy man himself," said Tim.

I tried not to giggle because the skinny old figure rising in front of us had nothing much on. He was waving his arms and pouring out an excited stream of words whose meaning we could only guess at.

"We'd better tether the ponies," said Tim, "and as it's a holy place I expect he wants us to take off our shoes."

"What about snakes?"

"Shan't find any snakes on these stones—or we'll see them before we tread on them."

"I hope you're right," I said.

But the old priest seemed no happier when we went forward on bare feet. He waved his arms more than ever, pointing to,

the heavens as though to threaten us with something unpleasant from that quarter, and strongly suggesting that we should turn back.

"Perhaps it's because women are forbidden," Tim began.

It was time to put my foot down. "Well, you're not leaving me here," I said. "Besides I don't suppose he's noticed at that distance, with me wearing lodhs!"

"Noticed what?" said Tim. "he's very dense sometimes."

We went forward, carrying our shoes in our hands, picking our way over the bare rocks. We reached the holy man, who paused for a moment to look at the sketch I thrust under his nose. He seemed to know what we were after, but it only made him twice as excited as before.

"Well, we're going," I told him in English, "and you're not going to stop us."

I laid a silver rupee on the rock beside him, but not even that seemed to check his indignation. There had been some more thunder, still a long way off, and we were anxious to find the cave and turn back in case the storm moved our way. We left the old man muttering beside his shrine, and hurried down the path as fast as the softness of our feet allowed.

It was getting steeper and steeper. Sometimes it was really a flight of steps made by rough boulders. At one point a landslide had carried away the path completely. We had to scramble down fifty feet of scree to the very floor of the gorge. It didn't matter. There was very little water trickling down, and the rocks were smooth.

Tim looked at his watch. "Five minutes more," he said. "If we don't find anything then, we turn back."

I didn't argue. It was gloomy down there in the chasm. The cliffs were sheer both sides, sometimes for hundreds of feet, sometimes much less. I felt like something small and unimportant which has slipped down a crack, and may easily be lost for ever.

Then, suddenly, we saw the cliff.

It wasn't really a cave. It was more of a cliff—a great overhanging cliff, where the base of the rock had been scooped



The overhanging face of the rock was covered with paintings.

by floods in the rainy season. It was dim—the whole gorge was gloomy, but not what you would call dark. High up on the smooth rock-face, too high for any flood to reach, but sheltered from rain by the bulge of the cliff above, the pictures spread themselves for twenty or thirty feet.

We cried out together, and our torches flashed upwards at the same moment. The paintings were in red and black and yellow. The boy's drawing had really given only the faintest idea. There were not only his archers battling together, there were horsemen and some kind of god in a chariot with wings. There were tigers and elephants, monkeys and deer, and a queer thing we decided must be meant for a peacock. We should have needed step-ladders to look at them closely. The rock was as smooth as a wall, and there was no means of climbing up.

"They must be thousands and thousands of years old," Tim said.

I was not so sure. The Stone Age seemed to have lasted longer in India than it did in England—the Rori Ghat people were scarcely out of it themselves—but certainly those pictures had not been painted yesterday. And knowing how excited historians had been over the same sort of thing in French caves, we felt sure we had made a pretty important find.

Then we heard the noise again.

"What's that?" Tim asked.

"Same old thunder," I said, "but a good deal nearer. We'd better be getting back. Look, it's raining." Sure enough, huge drops were pattering down on the boulders outside, but we of course were sheltered for the moment.

"I didn't mean that clap of thunder. Listen! That other noise . . . it goes on and on."

He was right. There was a distant rumble, like a train. And like a train, it was getting nearer. Tim grabbed my arm, and it may have been the gloomy light down there but I thought he looked very pale.

"Joan! Suppose this place is like Nicholson Falls!"

THE PAINTED CAVE

The guide-book warned you against exploring Nicholson Falls in the wet season. It said that a sudden rainstorm in the hills could lift the level of the water six or seven feet in no time, so that people could be trapped in the gorge and drowned.

"We'd better get back," I said rather chokily.

The noise got louder and louder, till it cut out the hiss of the rain, and, before we had taken a dozen steps, a khaki frothing flood came swirling round the corner and bubbled over our ankles.

"Quick!" I yelled. "Let's get out, before it's any deeper!"

We stopped just long enough to slip on our shoes without lacing them—it was worth the delay, because we could move so much faster over the stones. More and more water was surging down the gorge. It was up to our knees, and it was coming with such force that we could hardly struggle through it. We knew we should be all right if we could get back to the path, high up on the cliff-side, but there was still no sign of the landslide where we had slithered down. We panted along making good progress at first, but gradually getting slower as the water got deeper.

"It's no *good*," I felt. The flood was just about up to our waists. "Isn't there anywhere we can climb up?"

Like Tim, I'd been keeping my eyes open all along, but didn't see a place. The huge boulders strewn along the bed of the gorge offered refuge for a little while, but they would soon be covered. All the same, we clambered on to the biggest we could find, because we were so breathless that for a moment we couldn't struggle any farther. We were not exactly high and dry, because our feet were still in the river and the rain was coming down in sheets anyhow.

"I suppose it's no use shouting for help?" I said.

"Of course it isn't, idiot!"

But that was where he was wrong. We were just beginning to think seriously about death when there was a thin, nasal sort of yell from somewhere above. We looked up but could see nothing—the rain was like a pail of water thrown in your

face. Then something whipped through the air and Tim grabbed it and shoved it into my hand: it was a rope's end! I'm rather good with a rope. Even the gym teacher says I am like a monkey!

"Ladies first," said Tim, "but for Pete's sake don't dawdle."

As Tim afterwards declared: "I don't know what some chaps would have done with *their* sisters." He held on to the loose end of the rope, so that it shouldn't be carried downstream, and up I went. Pretty fast, I thought, but Tim said it seemed a long time before I reached the top, and that he was afloat and had swallowed gallons before he heard me yell: "Come on!"

Tim said he felt like the boy in the Indian rope-trick: "I couldn't see where it ended, it was like climbing up into the sky, and a sky that was coming down to meet you in bucketful of rain." He got quite literary about it!

I grabbed his hand and helped him over the top. The rope was belayed round a tree and there was no one else on the end of it but the old holy man, who seemed much more pleased to see us this time than he had been before. In fact, though conversation remained difficult, we became very friendly indeed on the way back to the ponies. We were very much aware he had saved our lives. It was clear that he was a good weather-prophet, whatever else he could foretell, and he'd done his best to warn us against what happened.

We never saw the paintings again, because it proved impossible to get near them throughout the monsoon season. But we reported our find, and after we got home to England we heard that archaeologists went down some months later, and were thrilled to death, though not in the way we nearly were. We weren't given any medals or anything, but our names are always mentioned as the discoverers: "Joan and Timothy Gordon of London, England"—a jolly funny way to put it, I always think.

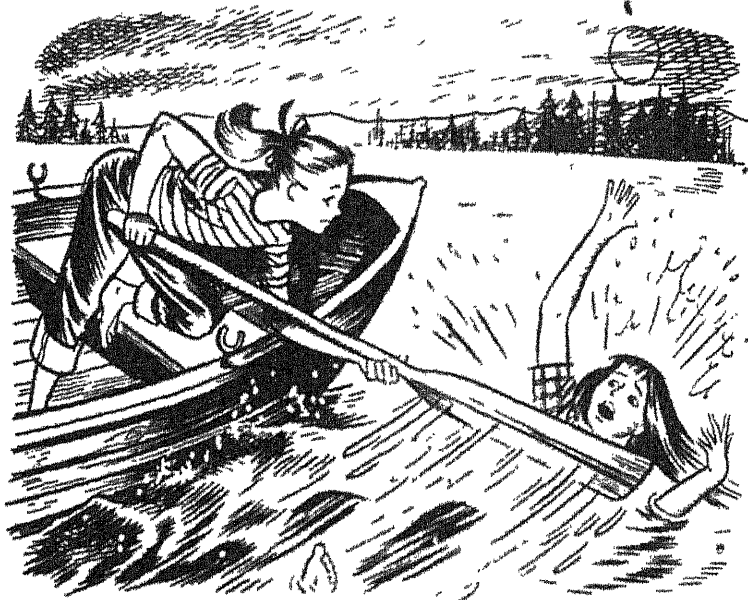


Guinea-pig

RUTH McKENNEY

I WAS nearly drowned, in my youth, by a Red Cross Life-saving Examiner, and I once suffered, in the noble cause of saving human life from a watery grave, a black eye which was a perfect daisy and embarrassed me for days. Looking back on my agonies, I feel that none of my sacrifices, especially the black eye, was in the least worth while. Indeed, to be brutally frank about it, I feel that the whole modern school of scientific life-saving is a lot of hogwash.

Of course, I've had rather bad luck with life-savers, right from the beginning. Long before I had any dealings with professional life-savers my sister nearly drowned me, quite by mistake. My father once took us to a northern Michigan fishing camp, where we found the life very dull. He used to go trolling for bass on our little lake all day long, and at night come home to our lodge, dead-beat and minus any bass. In the meantime Eileen and I, who were nine and ten at the



My helpful sister grabbed an oar and with an uncertain gesture hit me square on the chin.

time, used to take an old rowboat out to a shallow section of the lake and, sitting in the hot sun, feed worms to an unexciting variety of small, undernourished fish called gillies. We hated the whole business.

Father, however, loved to fish, even if he didn't catch a single fish in three weeks, which on this trip he didn't. One night, however, he carried his enthusiasm beyond a decent pitch. He decided to go bass fishing after dark, and rather than leave us alone in the lodge and up to God knows what, he ordered us to take our boat and row along after him.

Eileen and I were very bored rowing around in the dark, and finally, in desperation, we began to stand up and rock the boat, which resulted, at last, in my falling into the lake with a mighty splash.

When I came up, choking and mad as anything, Eileen saw me struggling, and, as she always says with a catch in her

voice, she only meant to help me. Good intentions, however are of little importance in a situation like that. For she grabbed an oar out of the lock, and with an uncertain gesture hit me square on the chin.

I went down with a howl of pain. Eileen, who could not see much in the darkness, was now really frightened. The cold water revived me after the blow and I came to the surface, considerably weakened but still able to swim over to the boat. Whereupon Eileen, in a noble attempt to give me the oar to grab, raised it once again, and socked me square on the top of the head. I went down again, this time without a murmur, and my last thought was a vague wonder that my own sister should want to murder me with a rowboat oar.

As for Eileen, she heard the dull impact of the oar on my head and saw the shadowy figure of her sister disappear. So she jumped in the lake, screeching furiously, and began to flail around in the water, howling for help and looking for me. At this point I came to the surface and swam over to the boat, with the intention of killing Eileen.

Father, rowing hard, arrived just in time to pull us both out of the water and prevent me from attacking Eileen with the rowboat anchor. The worst part about the whole thing, as far as I was concerned, was that Eileen was considered a heroine and Father told everybody in the lake community that she had saved my life. The postmaster put her name in for a medal.

After what I suffered from amateur life-saving, I should have known enough to avoid even the merest contact with the professional variety of water mercy. I learned too late that being socked with an oar is as nothing compared to what the Red Cross can think up as ways of drowning citizens.

From the very beginning of that awful life-saving course I took the last season I went to a girls' camp, I was a marked woman. The rest of the embryo life-savers were little, slender maidens, but I am a peasant type, and I was monstrously big for my fourteen years. I approximated, in poundage anyway, the theoretical adult we energetic young life-savers

were scheduled to rescue, and so I was, for the teacher's purpose, the perfect guinea-pig.

The first few days of the course were unpleasant for me, but not terribly dangerous. The elementary life-saving hold, in case you haven't seen some hapless victim being rescued by our brave beach guardians, is a snakelike arrangement for supporting the drowning citizen with one hand while you paddle him in to shore with the other. You are supposed to wrap your arm around his neck and shoulders, and keep his head well above water by resting it on your collar-bone.

This is all very well in theory, of course, but the trick that none of Miss Folgil's little pupils could master was keeping the victim's nose and mouth above the waterline. Time and again I was held in a vice-like grip by one of the earnest students with my whole face an inch or two under the billowing waves.

"No, no, Betsy," Miss Folgil would scream through her megaphone, as I felt the water rush into my lungs, "No, no, you must keep the head a little higher." At this point I would begin to kick and struggle, and generally the pupil would have to let go while I came up for air. Miss Folgil was always very stern with me.

"Ruth," she would shriek from her boat, "I insist! You must allow Betsy to tow you all the way in. We come to Struggling in Lesson Six."

This was but the mere beginning, however. A few lessons later we came to the section of the course where we learned how to undress under water in forty seconds. Perhaps I should say we came to the point where the *rest* of the pupils learned how to get rid of shoes and such while holding their breaths. I never did.

There was quite a little ceremony connected with this part of the course. Miss Folgil, and some lucky creature named as timekeeper and armed with a stop-watch, rowed the prospective victim out to deep water. The pupil, dressed in high, laced tennis shoes, long stockings, heavy bloomers, and a middy blouse, then stood poised at the end of the boat. When

the timekeeper yelled "Go!" the future boon to mankind dived into the water and, while holding her breath under the surface, unlaced her shoes and stripped down to her bathing suit. Miss Folgil never explained what connexion, if any, this curious rite had with saving human lives.

I had no middy of my own, so I borrowed one of my sister's. My sister was a slender little thing and I was, as I said, robust, which puts it politely. Eileen had some trouble wedging me into that middy, and once in it I looked like a stuffed sausage. It never occurred to me how hard it was going to be to get that middy off, especially when it was wet and slippery.

As we rowed out for my ordeal by undressing, Miss Folgil was snappish and bored.

"Hurry up," she said, looking irritated. "Let's get this over quick. I don't think you're ready to pass the test, anyway."

I was good and mad when I jumped off the boat, and determined to Make Good and *show* that old Miss Folgil, whom I was beginning to dislike thoroughly. As soon as I was under water, I got my shoes off, and I had no trouble with the bloomers or stockings. I was just beginning to run out of breath when I held up my arms and started to pull off the middy.

Now the middy, in the event you don't understand the principle of this girl-child garment, is made with a small head-opening, long sleeves, and no front opening. You pull it on and off over your head. You do if you are lucky, that is. I got the middy just past my neck so that my face was covered with heavy linen cloth, when it stuck.

I pulled frantically and my lungs started to burst. . . . I came to the surface, a curious sight, my head enfolded in a water-soaked middy blouse. I made a brief sound, a desperate glub-glub, a call for help. My arms were stuck in the middy and I couldn't swim. I went down. I breathed in large quantities of water and linen cloth.

I came up again, making final frantic appeals. Four feet



"She has been under water for eighty-five seconds, Miss Folgil."

away sat a professional life-saver, paying absolutely no attention to somebody drowning right under her nose. I went down again, struggling with last panic-stricken feverishness, fighting water and a middy blouse for my life. At this point the time-keeper pointed out to Miss Folgil that I had been under water for eighty-five seconds, which was quite a time for anybody. Miss Folgil was very annoyed, as she hated to get her bathing suit wet, but a thoughtful teacher, she picked up her megaphone, shouted to the rest of the class on the bench to watch, and dived in after me.

If I say so myself, I gave her quite a time resuscitating me. I presented a new and different problem, and am probably written up in textbooks now under the heading "What To Do When the Victim is Entangled in a Tight Middy Blouse." Miss Folgil finally towed my still-breathing body over to the boat, reached for her bowie knife, which she carried on a ring with her whistle, and cut Eileen's middy straight up the front.

GLINFA-PIG

Then she towed me with Hold No. 2 right in to the shore and delivered me up to the class for artificial respiration. I will never forgive the Red Cross for that terrible trip through the water, when I might have been hoisted into the boat and rowed in except for Miss Folgil's over-developed sense of drama and pedagogy.

I tried to quit the life-saving class after that, but the head



councillor at the camp said I must keep on, to show that I was the kind of girl who always finished what she planned to do. Otherwise, she assured me, I would be a weak character and never amount to anything when I grew up.

So I stayed for Lesson 6: "Struggling." After that I didn't care if I never amounted to anything when I grew up. In fact, I hoped I wouldn't. It would serve everybody right, especially Miss Folgil. I came a little late to the class session that day and missed the discussion of theory, always held on the beach before the actual practice in the lake . . .

"We were waiting for you, Ruth," Miss Folgil chirped cheerfully to me as I arrived, sullen and downcast, at the little group of earnest students sitting on the sand.

"What for?" I said warily. . . .

"You swim out," Miss Folgil went on, ignoring my bad temper, "until you are in deep water—about twelve feet will do. Then you begin to flail around and shout for help. One of the students will swim out to you."

All this sounded familiar and terrible. I had been doing that for days, and getting water in my nose for my pains.

"But when the student arrives," Miss Folgil went on, "you must not allow her to simply tow you away. You must struggle, just as hard as you can. You must try to clutch her by the head, you must try to twine your legs about her, and otherwise hamper her in trying to save you."

Now, *this* sounded something like. I was foolishly fired by the attractive thought of getting back at some of the fiends who had been ducking me in the name of science for the past two weeks. Unfortunately, I hadn't studied Chapter 9, entitled "How to Break Holds the Drowning Swimmer uses." Worse, I hadn't heard Miss Folgil's lecture on "Be Firm with the Panic-stricken Swimmer—Better a Few Bruises than a Watery Grave." This last was Miss Folgil's own opinion, of course.

So I swam out to my doom, happy as a lark. Maybelle Anne Pettijohn, a tall, lean girl who ordinarily wore horn-rimmed spectacles, was Miss Folgil's choice to rescue me.

GUINEA-PIG

I laughed when I saw her coming. I thought I could clean up Maybelle Anne easily enough, but alas, I hadn't counted on Maybelle Anne's methodical approach to life. She had read Chapter 9 in our textbook, and she had listened carefully to Miss Folgil's inspiring words. Besides, Maybelle Anne was just naturally the kind of girl who ran around doing



I lunged for her neck, and got my legs around her waist.

people dirty for their own good. "This may hurt your feelings," she used to say mournfully, "but I feel I have to tell you for your own good. . . ."

When Maybelle Anne got near me, I enthusiastically lunged for her neck and hung on with both hands while getting her around her waist with my legs. Maybelle Anne thereupon dug her finger-nails into my hand with ferocious force, and I let go and swam away, hurt and surprised. This was distinctly not playing fair. "What's the idea?" I called out.

"It says to do that in the book," Maybelle Anne replied, treading water.

"Well, you lay off that stuff," I said, angered, book or no book. Maybelle Anne was a Girl Guide, too, and I was shocked to think she'd go around using her finger-nails in a fair fight.

"Come on, struggle," Maybelle Anne said, getting winded from treading water. I swam over, pretty reluctant and much more wary. Believe it or not, this time Maybelle Anne, who has two medals for being a Beaver or what ever it is Girl Guides with a lot of medals get to be, bit me.

In addition to biting me, Maybelle Anne swung her arm around my neck, with the intention of towing me in to the shore. But I still had plenty of fight left and I had never been so mad in my life. I got Maybelle Anne under water two or three times, and I almost thought I had her when suddenly, to my earnest surprise, she hauled off and hit me as hard as she could, right in the eye. Then she towed me in, triumphant as anything.

Maybelle Anne afterwards claimed it was all in the book, and she wouldn't even apologize for my black eye. Eileen and I fixed her, though. We put a little garter snake in her bed and scared the daylights out of her. Maybelle Anne was easy to scare anyway, and really a very disagreeable girl. I used to hope that she would come to a bad end, which, from my point of view, at least, she did. Maybelle Anne grew up to be a Regional Red Cross Life-saving Examiner.

I'll bet she just loves her work.





Because of Jane

T. F. W. HICKEY

I HAD been looking forward to going to Manor Towers for years. Mum had been to school there, and as long as I could remember she had told me things about it, and promised I should go too when I was old enough. So when at last the time drew near, and Mum sat sewing name tapes on to my new school clothes, and telling me more and more about Manor Towers and how she had loved it, I grew more and more excited. Afterwards, when I was there and knew what it was really like, I used to think of how I sat, snipping off the neat red PAMELA NEWELL PRICES, ready for Mum to sew on, imagining how I was going to enjoy school. But I didn't enjoy it. It was because of Jane.

I noticed Jane at once when I got to school. She was small, with black hair and a straight fringe. She was surrounded by friends, and everything she said must have been awfully funny because she and her friends were always laughing. I

watched her, and thought I'd like her for a friend myself. Soon enough she bounced up to me.

"You're a Prog," she said.

"I know. And I can't do up my top button, or walk first or——" I gabbled out all the rules, because of course Mum had told me how you were called a Prog for your first term at Manor Towers and all it meant.

"Who told you that?" asked Jane.

"My Mum. She——"

But Jane did not wait while I explained. She gave a loud hoot of laughter and dashed off to the other new girl. There was only one other because it was the summer term.

"You're a Prog!" said Jane again, and the other new girl, who was called Louisa and was sandy and rather fat, got very red and said: "I'm not." Jane then said she'd explain, and sat and talked to her for ages, and Louisa said: "Yes, I see," meekly at intervals.

This was the beginning of Jane hating me. She called me Know-All Price instead of Pam, and whenever I asked anything she and all her friends yelled, "Ask your Mum," or "Didn't Mum tell you?" The only person who would talk to me was Louisa. I was more miserable than I had ever been in my life, and it was agony having to write to Mum on Sundays and say how lovely it all was.

Early in the term Miss James gave out that our form was to do scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Parent's Day in July, and we were to start reading it in English. Everyone talked about who would get what part.

"Jane will be Puck, of course," said all Jane's friends. Puck in this thing is a mischievous fairy—a lovely part which everyone would have liked. "There isn't anyone else who looks like Puck. She'll be marvellous," they said.

"There's Pam," said Louisa, but not very loud, and only one person bothered to answer her.

"Miss James isn't likely to give that part to a Prog!" she said.

I made up my mind then and there that I would be Puck

I knew I could do it. I longed to do it. And I wanted to score off Jane.

I suppose Jane and I were the only people who looked the part because in English Miss James said "Jane and Pam read Puck in turns. You begin, Jane."

Jane obviously had not bothered to look at the thing beforehand, had not the vaguest idea what it was all about,



Now I acted it for all I was worth

and if she thought about it at all thought, of course, she'd get the part. She always got everything. She stumbled through the first half of the reading. Then came my turn. I'd read the whole thing over, and I'd nearly learnt Puck's bits off by heart. Now I acted it for all I was worth. Everyone looked at me, and several people tittered until Miss James shut them up. Later, when the parts were stuck upon the board I read:

"PUCK P. Newell Price"

—and Jane was just A FAIRY!

"They're all absolutely furious," Louisa told me later. "They say you cheated, and that no decent girl could let herself go like that in class. Jane doesn't say much, but she's livid."

The others all quite liked Louisa and talked to her, but she stuck to me through thick and thin and told me all they said. I did not care now what they said. I had the rehearsals to look forward to, and I kept thinking that when Mum came on Parents' Day she'd see me in one of the best parts and that she need never know the others hated me.

It was getting near the great day and by bad luck I'd twice been late at rehearsals. The second time Miss James, who was getting pretty worked up about the whole thing said: "You'd better be careful or you'll lose your part." For the next rehearsal I arrived so much too early that Miss Johnson, who was doing the dresses, sent me up to the attic to fetch



I started up when I heard the door bang.

some fairies' wings. I flew upstairs and as I ran I thought I heard someone behind me. I never looked round but dashed straight into the attic and dived into a huge trunk in the far corner which is full of dressing-up things. I searched wildly for the fairies' wings. They were under everything, of course, and I didn't even stay to tidy up. I ran back to the door, my arms full of wings. It was shut and would not open. I had to put down my load and take both hands to it. I pulled and pushed, and shook the door, and banged against it. The handle turned easily, but it was fast—as if it had been locked. I had heard it bang when I was head down in the trunk. But how could it lock itself? I had not time to think of anything except "I'll be late again!" and I continued to rattle futilely at the door. Then I rushed over to the window. It was festooned with cobwebs and bolted on the inside. It would take time to open—and I wasted more time shouting for someone to come and open the door. But no one came, and at last I realized it was hopeless. I went and wrestled with the window. It opened, and I got out of it on to a sloping bit of roof. If I had been less agitated about the rehearsal I would have enjoyed it. The slates were warm in the sun and I could see for miles round, and there was old Bates the school gardener staking peas far below me. But I had no time to enjoy the view. I searched wildly round, and saw that, by letting myself down a drain pipe, I could drop on to a window sill. Fortunately I enjoy climbing, and had on my gym shoes as there is a lot of jumping about in Puck's part. Lucky this hasn't happened to Louisa, I thought. She trembles if you take her near a height, and hates climbing.

I got safely in through the window of an empty bedroom, dashed downstairs, and shot breathlessly into the Hall. It was just as I feared. The rehearsal was in full swing. Jane—JANE—was saying: "I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," and not just reading it off the book, but really acting it. Her black eyes shone, she was word perfect, and she must have listened to everything Miss James taught me to do, for she was doing it. For an instant I stood,

spellbound. Then I rushed forward to Miss James, who was standing just in front of me, and not until I had seized her by the arm did I realize that the Head was standing beside her, attending a rehearsal for the first time. It was too late to stop myself.

"Miss James!" I shouted, "I——"

"Pamela!" said Miss James, "This is intolerable! You arrive twenty minutes late: you interrupt the rehearsal: you——"

At this moment the door was flung open and old Bates stumbled into the room, panting, his face purple with agitation and alarm.

"Madam," he said to the Head, "there's one of the young ladies climbing on the roof, right up among the towers!"

The Head looked at me. I had not realized it, but the roof had come off on me a lot, and I was black all over.

"Pamela, have you been on the roof?" she said.

"Miss J. was in an awful bate when you weren't there at the beginning of the rehearsal," said Louisa hours later. We had squashed ourselves into the boot cupboard for privacy, and were discussing the miserable situation surrounded by piles of muddy shoes. "Then Jane bounced up and offered. 'I'll do Puck till Pam turns up,' she said, and—well, you know how she did it."

"I don't. Tell me."

"As well as if she'd been rehearsing it for weeks. Of course the others all say she's—marvellous."

"Say she's better than me you mean."

"Well, that's what *they* say. Oh, Pam, what did the Head say to you?"

"All the usual stuff about being disobedient, unreliable, selfish, discourteous—oh, all the usual things. But she said she would not have taken my part away if I had not broken all rules by climbing on the roof."

"But didn't you tell her——?"

"Of course I told her the attic door had been locked and it

BECAUSE OF JANE



"Pamela, have you been on the roof?" she said.

was the only way to get to the rehearsal. She took me straight up to the attic and the door wasn't locked. 'I don't think,' she said, 'that it is likely that someone came and locked this door at two o'clock this afternoon, and unlocked it half an hour later.' Of course she didn't believe a word I said."

"Oh, Pam, do you think ——?"

"I don't think, I *know* that Jane ran upstairs after me, locked me in on purpose so that I'd miss the rehearsal, and sneaked upstairs and unlocked the door again while the Head was jawing me," I shrieked, rushing out of the boot cupboard because, in my helpless fury, I could not bear even Louisa.

The queer thing was that after this the others began talking to me. Not Jane. She still sneered whenever I opened my mouth and jeered at every word I said. But even her friends stopped shrieking, "Ask your Mum" at me, and got quite friendly when Jane was not looking. But I was so miserable about losing Puck's part, and so furious that Jane was doing it, and so sick of hearing Jane's friends saying: "Jane you're marvellous as Puck," that nothing cheered me up. It suddenly became the thing to get through the attic window on to the roof, and small parties of two or three used to sneak out at night, sit shivering on the roof, and sometimes they looked at the drain pipe I'd slipped down and said: "Oh Pam, how did you dare?" No one got caught, because we were careful never to go till it was getting dark. One night we dragged Louisa out, with a cake she had got for her birthday, and ate it under the stars. Louisa said she kept her eyes tight shut the whole time in case she got dizzy, and she giggled so much I was terrified we would be heard. Jane sneered, of course, next morning about people behaving like babies.

"You'd come too, only you're afraid," said Louisa, who was very cock-a-hoop over having plucked up enough courage.

"Who says I'm afraid—of anything?" said Jane.

"I do. You daren't go on the roof because you're afraid. Custard!" said Louisa.

All Jane's friends, of course, echoed round, saying,



To sneak out at night became the thing to do.

"Jane's not afraid of anything," but I said: "It's a dare!"

Of course once it was a dare come what may Jane had got to do it.

The whole thing was very carefully planned. Jane was dared to go out on the roof, by herself, at night. It was no use the girls in her room seeing her off, and her coming back half an hour later and saying she had been. There had got to be a witness. I was chosen to be the witness. Jane and I slept in different rooms. It was arranged that I was to go out on to the roof at dusk, and the minute it got dark Jane was to follow. Once she had met me, the dare was over. Immediately I knew I was going to be the witness I had my idea, but I did not say anything about it, even to Louisa. Perhaps I was a bit ashamed of it even then. But I hated Jane a lot. She had taken my part by a foul trick. She had spoiled my first term. And I knew that, whatever she said, she was afraid of the dark.

It is not easy to conceal a sheet about one's person when one shares a room with three girls. But in the excitement of arranging a life-like dummy in my bed I managed to cram one under my dressing gown, and whisked quickly out of the room and upstairs to the attic. The attic window opened on to a gently sloping roof, and about eight feet below it was a narrow passage, covered with tarred roofing felt, with another wall of steeply sloping roof rising sharply up from the other side of it. At one end of this passage was the drain pipe I'd slid down. At the other end was a drop to the school quadrangle, far far below. I established myself at the end of the passage over the drain pipe, and I lay flat on the ground with the sheet beside me. It began to get dark. For what seemed a very long time nothing happened. I began to think Jane was not coming after all. I wondered whether if next day she just said it was silly, *she* wasn't going to waste her time fooling about on a roof. Would she get away with it? I did not think she would. Then I heard a sound. The attic window opened. Nothing more happened for some time. "She's finked it after all," I thought. But she hadn't. I saw a figure get slowly out of the window, and sit for a minute on the sill. Then it slid down the roof, and stood on the passage looking round.

This was the moment I had been waiting for. I rose suddenly, holding the sheet in front of me as high as my eyes. Behind it I began to move stealthily towards Jane. I had wanted to give Jane the fright of her life. I succeeded. She did not scream. But I could feel her fear from where I was. She did not run away. But, with her eyes riveted on me, she began backing slowly down the passage. For an instant I did not take in what was happening. Then I tried to shout "It's only me!" but my throat had dried up and only a rasping sound came out, and Jane continued to back, rather faster, down the passage. I was the one who screamed as, still looking straight at me, she stepped backwards over the edge of the roof.

I cannot believe that, however long I live, I will ever have a

BECAUSE OF JANE



I tried to shout, "It's only me!" but my throat had dried up.

worse moment than the one in which I flung myself down on the edge of the roof and looked over. I knew what I would see. A crumpled heap that had been Jane lying far below me, a tiny, still spot in the big empty courtyard. Actually I saw nothing. It was too dark. But I was screaming: "Jane, Jane," over and over again, and a wild thought of flinging myself after her was tearing through my brain as I lay there, clutching the edge of the roof, straining my head over the edge to see. Then I began to hear a voice, saying: "Do shut up." It was like Jane's voice. I trembled and my teeth chattered. But I heard it again. "Pam. I'm here." It *was* Jane's voice. I believe I screamed Jane's name again. I had the ghastly feeling of being in a nightmare not able to wake up. "Stop screaming, idiot, someone will hear you!" said the voice. I suddenly began to recover. If Jane was all right—if only Jane was all right—— "Where are you?" I quavered.

"Here on a sort of shelf just below you. It isn't your fault I'm not a squashed fly on the quadrangle. All right, don't start howling again."

"I'm only trying to think of a way to get you up."

"Think it to yourself then."

"I've got a sheet. I could let it down to you."

"Do you think I'd trust myself to the end of a sheet with you to pull me up? I'm afraid to move a finger as it is."

"If I made a rope out of the sheet and tied one end to something . . . ?"

Even as I spoke I knew I had not the least idea how to make a sheet into a rope and that there was nothing to which to tie it. Jane did not answer. I sat, staring into the dark, wildly wondering what to do, when suddenly, like a miracle, the moon rode out from behind a cloud. The roofs and the sky were illuminated with bright light. I hung over the edge of the roof and looked down. There was Jane, only about six feet below me, crouched on a narrow stone shelf which ran under the overhanging roof. I could see where she had stepped on an unsupported half foot of tarred felt which ran out beyond the edge of the passage. It had broken under her and she had fallen, not clear down to the flagged court below, but only the short drop to the narrow precarious ledge on which she now lay huddled. I could see more. I could see that the ledge ran along under the attic roof for about ten yards and then joined one of the little towers from which the school takes its name.

"Jane. Jane, it's all right——"

"Don't shout."

"You can get along to your right," I whispered. "Edge along. It's not far, and you'll come out on a solid bit at the bottom of one of the towers."

But all my explanations and urgings were in vain. Jane said she could not move.

"Wait," I said. "I'm coming."

I kicked off my dressing gown and slippers. Pyjamas and bare feet are ideal for climbing. I crept up one roof and down



Little by little, they edged their way along the ledge.

the other side, and let myself down rather a steep bit, and reached the tower. That was the easiest bit. Now I had to creep along that shelf, a shelf not much more than a foot wide, with bare wall beside me and beyond the ledge nothing but the drop to the ground below. I decided to edge along standing, facing the wall, with my hands flat against it. I had just edged out on to it when the moon went behind a cloud again. I had to wait. "It's all right, Jane," I cried, loud as I dared. "I'm coming." There was no reply. Had she fainted and fallen? Would the moon ever come out again? It might be hours before it did. Could I go on in the dark? It would have been madness to try. With dry mouth, icy hands and feet, and throbbing head I waited, it seemed for hours. Then, as suddenly as before, the moon came out. But all around her were great ragged clouds. At any moment, it seemed, it might be dark again. There was no time to lose. I crept along

the ledge. I could see Jane now, huddled motionless against the wall. Was she dead? "I'm coming," I kept saying, so as not to give her a fright when I did arrive. At last she looked up. Her face in the moonlight was drained of all colour.

"Pam, I can't move, I can't," she said.

Now came the hardest part of all. By persuasion, by conversation, by coaxing, after I had rubbed her hands warm, and gently got her slippers off, I got Jane on to her feet, face to the wall. I was in front of her of course, and I had to edge along a bit and trust to her to follow. She did. Inch by inch we crept back. The moon still shone. If it had disappeared during that awful journey we should have been helpless. At last Jane clutched the tower as if she would never let it go. I was panting with my whole body, and sweat was running into my eyes. Jane was leaning limply against the solid tower, hands outstretched. "Now it'll be easy," I said. It was. Jane had regained her nerve.

"You do look a sight," she said. "Mind you wash before breakfast tomorrow or you'll give the whole show away."

The climb back would have been quite stiff by daylight in cold blood. But now it seemed nothing. We crawled up faces of the roof on our hands and knees and slid down the other side. The clouds had disappeared and the moon shone out of a clear sky, and a wind got up.

It was only when we reached the attic that I noticed how lame Jane was. Her face was still as white as paper and she dragged herself down stairs by the banisters.

Jane did not appear at breakfast next morning and her room mates said she was in the San.

"And the play tomorrow! It'll be nothing without Jane," they said.

After first school I was sent for by the Head. "We must have been seen after all," was my first thought.

"Jane is in the San with a badly sprained ankle," the Head said quite pleasantly. "So I'd like you to play Puck in the performance tomorrow afternoon. There will be a special rehearsal this evening." Then she said—and I've never told

anyone this, because not even Louisa would believe it--
 "And I'd like to apologize to you Pamela. I did not believe you when you told me you were locked into the attic the day you got out on to the roof. Jane has now told me she locked you in. She wanted you to know she did it."

"I did know."

"You can't have *known*. You *guessed*! You're looking rather under the weather too, Pamela. We don't want *both* our Pucks in the San! Go to bed early, and tell Miss James I'm letting you off evening school."

I did not enjoy playing Puck as much as I had expected, though afterwards they all said I was marvellous. Jane was in the San till the end of term and was only allowed one visitor on the last day. She chose me. She was still looking awfully pale. She did not say much.

"I didn't tell the others about that--night," I said after a bit.

"Oh good. But I knew you wouldn't."

"I didn't bring you any flowers. I suppose I ought to have. You in the San and all."

"Don't be daft, Know-All Price," said Jane.

"Don't call me that."

"I'll call you Puck from now on," said Jane, and grinned. I knew I was going to enjoy next term--because of Jane.



Mountain Mist

ROWENA FARRE

THE county of Sutherland is composed for the greater part of moor, bog, and water. Trees are a rarity; birch and pine scatter the moors singly or in small groups. Outcrops of rock, often weathered to strange shapes are strewn over the landscape. When a storm is approaching, or in the half-light, the effect of this boulder-strewn landscape is eerie and to some people even frightening.

After twenty years as a teacher in one of the Home Counties my Aunt Miriam, with whom I lived, decided to give up her career and return to her native Scotland. Her original plan had been to buy a small house near Inverness, where she had lived as a girl, but on hearing of a croft for sale at a moderate price in a particularly remote and barren part of Sutherland her pioneering spirit got the better of her and she bought the place.

. The croft possessed no conveniences, ancient or modern. .

MOUNTAIN MIST

Lighting was by paraffin lamps. Water had to be carried in buckets from a stream. There was, of course, no telephone. To get medical aid entailed a journey on foot or by trap to the nearest *clachan*; or village, some nine miles away, to put through a call to a township, for no doctor or nurse lived in the *clachan*. A path, little better than a sheep-track, wound from our door over the moors. . . . During winter, stretches of this road would be covered in deep snowdrifts making travel along it impossible for weeks at a time. In late autumn we would get in a good supply of stores to tide us over the bad patches when we were snowbound. . . .

Our days began to run to a pattern of rising, tending the animals, breakfast, my lessons—I was ten when I went to live in the croft—carrying in the day's supply of water, cooking, walks over the magnificent countryside during summer, a trip to the *clachan* once a fortnight to collect provisions in the small pony trap we had bought, and in the evenings strumming on the piano and reading. When I first came to these wild parts there was one thing that impressed itself most forcibly on my consciousness, and which still remains my most potent memory of them. That was the silence. It was a permanent, living silence. Thunder, driving rain, and keening winds were sounds which seemed to emanate from it and fade back into it. Sometimes, particularly on a hot summer's day, it could be sensed in its profundity for the space of a few seconds, unbroken by so much as a crepitation or stirring of wind. At other moments the sudden bark of a deer or cry of a whaup (curlew) only served to emphasize its depth. It was a vast, unseen but ever-present reality.

When walking in the high hills we generally went together and carried a compass in case we lost our bearings should a mist suddenly descend. Here, sometimes growing a few inches below the snowline, we were occasionally fortunate in finding flowers of the higher altitudes, such as moss campion, *saxifraga cernua*, and mountain aven. These rare finds we admired but never picked.

... will stealth up here if one wanted
... of the red deer which grazed these high

... the hill stands out in my memory. ... from Aunt Miriam, I had ... what when alone. But it was mid- ... translucent blue, larks sang into ... A mountain hare gave ... then continued with its feeding. ... the curious dry croak of a ptarmigan— ... The day gave every indication of being a propitious one for observing wild life. I had left Strath na Sàbhalaidh of the River Seillean and was climbing in the direction of Creag Mhor. The azure loch, Gorm Loch Mor as it is called in Gaelic, lay to my right. Stopping a moment to survey the countryside below me, I saw to my annoyance that I was being followed by our dog, Ben. We had had Ben since he was a pup—a yellow mongrel pup. He stood low on the ground, had flop ears and was barrel-chested. But in spite of a somewhat ungainly build he was fleet of foot. He had attempted to follow me when I left the croft but I had ordered him home and walked forward, unrelenting. A dog is a troublesome companion when one is wanting to observe wild life for it chases and scares every creature away. I waited for the miscreant to catch me up. He encircled me and went on ahead, his nose to the ground, in the guilty fashion of a dog who is fully aware that he has disobeyed orders. I called him to me sharply and fixed a leather belt I had been wearing around his neck. His activities curtailed somewhat, we continued upwards.

Not long after Ben had made his unwelcome appearance he started to strain hard on the improvised lead. I managed to pull him up just in time. Less than a foot from him I saw to my surprise and delight a nest of young ptarmigan. It was not a nest in the usual meaning of the word, for the birds lay in a shallow hollow of the ground. Their sandy and grey plumage made them almost indistinguishable from the sur-

MOUNTAIN MIST

rounding earth and stones. Having dragged the excited Ben over to a rock and fastened him to a convenient projection, I returned to the birds. It was the first—and last—time I discovered ptarmigan nestlings. Disregarding Aunt's instructions on no account to touch nestlings, let alone remove one, I extracted a handkerchief from a sleeve and kneeling down, inserted a hand among the warm, apparently fearless brood of seven. Carefully I lifted one out and placed it on the handkerchief, tying the square of linen in such a way that only the tiny head and tail were visible. To make doubly sure that it did not escape or weary itself with trying to do so, I tied a wide piece of grass round the middle of the little bundle to keep the wings tight to its sides. Then I went back for the yapping Ben. In the distance I had spotted a herd of hinds with their calves but his yapping had caused them to move out of sight. I decided to make for home. Walking along a narrow corrie, the lead in one hand and the ptarmigan in the other, I began to wonder, my conscience pricking me considerably by now, whether to tell Aunt that I had just happened upon the bird lying by itself. A truthful account of how I had come by it would, I know, earn me a severe reprimand.

A change had come over the sky since I had last taken note of it; the blue was not so intense and thin, vaporous clouds were forming. Down a cleft of the corrie blew a long streamer of mist. The sight of it made me double my pace. I remembered then that I had come without a compass as I had not planned when setting out to go so high or so far. More and more clouds were forming in the sky and puffs of mist, less vaporous now, blew with increasing frequency into the corrie. There was always the possibility that a mist would disperse as suddenly as it had come; on the other hand, it was equally possible for it to last hours or even days. I started to run, not as yet from any sense of panic, but because I realized it was imperative to reach the end of the corrie quickly and get a good view of my bearings. I was about five miles from home, high up in the hills. But it is not mileage that makes

for distance and remoteness in these parts, it is the rough going, the variability of the weather conditions, and the danger of bogs and exposure. Besides the compass, we also took with us when walking in the hills a jersey and windproof jacket each to obviate the risk of exposure should the weather turn cold, and we kept in reserve a sandwich and bar of chocolate. All these things I had neglected to bring, and I began to hope fervently that the floating veils of mist would prove a false alarm. I stood on the open hillside and noted the River Skinsdale far off in the valley below, the croft to the right, and a great boulder lying at the bottom of the hill which I would have to make sure of passing on my left, from there bearing steadily in a southerly direction, avoiding three large areas of bogland. There was no path to follow. As I started down the hill, keeping my eyes on the boulder—my immediate destination—and trying at the same time to avoid rocks and loose scree, the mist swept over the brow of the hill and enveloped me, blotting out every landmark and object excepting those within a few feet.

These mountain mists are as dense as a London pea-souper, but unlike the latter's dirty yellow colouring are as white as intangible cottonwool. If caught in one and uncertain of one's bearings, by far the best plan is to take what shelter one can find, pull on sweater and windjacket, and stick it out, telling oneself that one still has a bar of chocolate and a sandwich to ward off the pangs of hunger. The situation can be accepted calmly under these conditions. Apart from getting chilled and a little hungry and thirsty the hill-walker should be none the worse for his experience. But if one has been foolhardy enough to come without the minimum necessities for hill walking, as I had that day, a mist can be a very real danger. I was clad in a cotton dress, had no extra clothing to put on, and had eaten all the sandwiches. Stumbling and tripping down the hill, I managed by some miracle to reach my first objective, the boulder. Here I halted and reviewed the situation. Should I remain where I was on safe ground while the mist lasted, and run the risk of exposure should it fail to

MOUNTAIN MIST



I wrapped the ptarmigan chick in my handkerchief.

lift for some hours, or should I continue forward and thereby run the equal risk of losing my sense of direction and stepping into a bog? I decided to go on.

Putting the ptarmigan into a pocket, I started off due south. Ben walked slowly at my side. I kept a firm grip on the lead and felt very thankful that he had had the temerity to follow me; his company was now most welcome. Various thoughts struck me uncomfortably as I picked my way forward, one of which was that, should the mist continue so dense, it would be quite possible to pass the croft within a few yards and remain unaware of having done so. I held out my free arm and was just able to see the tips of my fingers; beyond them all was covered as though by a white blanket. I began to feel very cold and tired, but the tiredness was almost certainly due to fear allied with having to concentrate continuously in order to keep going on what I hoped was a southerly course. I had been feeling quite fresh in the corrie. I strove hard to keep calm and not panic, though if I relaxed the hold on myself a moment, fear welled up and vitiated mental and bodily energy.

Time as reckoned by man in minutes and hours began to lose meaning and I found it increasingly difficult to calculate even approximately how long I had been walking since the mist descended, and how far I had come—half a mile, two miles? I had no idea. Telling myself that it was necessary to keep my circulation going, I started to run. Ben dragged back on the lead. There was a squelch as I stepped up to my ankles in bog. During the ensuing seconds, after I had hastily stepped out again, I lost every vestige of a sense of direction. North, south, east or west, I was quite ignorant in which direction I faced. What little common sense I had left told me to stay on the relatively stable piece of ground on to which I had stepped back, and sit there until the mist lifted, exposure now being the lesser danger. Yet I felt I could not bear to remain much longer in this spot surrounded by invisible quagmires.

On walks with Ben I would often call "Home!" to him when the time came to retrace my steps, so that he would

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know I was returning. Now I spoke this word to him and trusted he would have the initiative to take upon himself the task of leading us back to the croft. For what seemed ages he continued to sit without making a move.

• "Home!" I repeated urgently.

At last he got up and with no sign of hurry began to walk forward; I followed, clinging to the lead as a drowning



"Home!" I repeated urgently.

person might cling to a length of driftwood. We continued to walk forwards at a slow pace. As the damp grasses flicked round my ankles I expected at any moment to sink into a morass. We reached firmer ground, where the grass grew shorter and more wiry, and I began to breathe more easily. Ben meandered round rocks, sometimes turning right, sometimes left, in a most haphazard manner, until in desperation I

was on the point of taking over leadership again. But I stopped myself from doing so; he had got us out of the bog-land, now let him get us home, I told myself. Though we seemed to be circling badly I came to lose all feelings of anxiety as I placed the responsibility of a safe homecoming on Ben's shoulders. Our walk through the mist began to have a dreamlike, unending quality. The rear portions of Ben's anatomy were visible to me, his forequarters and head faded into the mist. Presently a dim sense of recognition possessed me although I could still see only Ben's nether regions and a few feet of grass. Then my left hand touched stone—a wall—and turning my head I could just see a faint light shining from behind a window. Still leading, Ben walked through the open door of the croft. We were home, yet strangely, I had no great feeling of relief. That was felt by Aunt Miriam who, since the mist had enveloped the countryside, had sat in the croft acutely anxious, knowing that it would be quite useless to go and look for me.

As I sat in the glow of the lamplight spooning up hot soup and clad in dressing-gown and slippers I suddenly remembered the ptarmigan. I had taken off my dress and hung it up in the cupboard, forgetful of the wee bird. He proved to be a hardy specimen and was still very much alive. Unwrapping him from the handkerchief I administered a few drops of warm milk and put him into a cage. Owing to the circumstances of my homecoming my crime in removing him from the nest was hardly commented upon by Aunt.

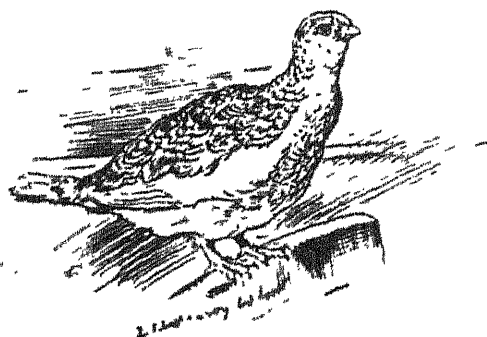
This young bird, which I named Jim, was successfully reared. Every three hours during the day he received a small quantity of heather shoots and chopped fresh berries. Ptarmigan are almost exclusively vegetarian. In the evenings he was let out of his cage and flew about the parlour. He developed into a fine bird with a bright red comb over his eyes. When he was old enough to fly he was released.

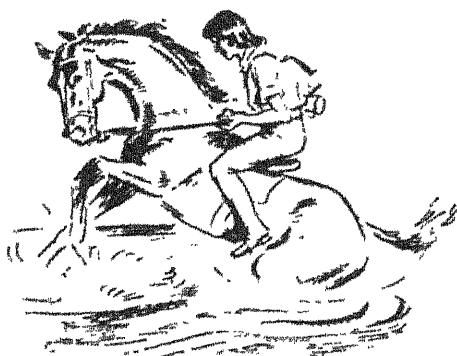
As I was of a somewhat superstitious nature in those days, Ben's feat of homefinding in the mist began to appear to me in retrospect as an act imbued with an almost occult signific-

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ance. It was the only time he had followed me against orders and it so happened that this was the only occasion I had got well and truly lost. Aunt Miriam, too, was much impressed with his prowess, but she rejected my suggestion that he had hurried after me in the rôle of a self-constituted guardian, having had a premonition that I would run into danger while out on the walk.

Whether Ben possessed psychic powers or not he certainly possessed great intelligence and a better knowledge of the hills than we did. Of the dogs I have owned since, none has had such character as he nor been endowed with such tremendous energy.





Julie Wins Her Wings

A. TYSON

JULIE GRAHAM galloped her horse Starlight, through the Australian Bush. The slight breeze ruffled her short fair hair, cooling her in her long ride.

"Whoa, boy, steady," she whispered in his ear. She slowed him down to a trot as they neared the river which broadened out ahead. The river was higher than normal as there had been many storms in the Blue Mountains farther north. Julie glanced behind her. Her mother, father, sister and Black George, their aboriginal cattle drover, were coming up behind.

The Graham family had left their comfortable homestead, and were off to spend a few days at their weekend holiday camp on the farther side of the river.

"Come on, boy, we can cross here."

Julie nudged Starlight into the waters, keeping him to the ford. The swirling river looked fiercer than it actually was. The water level came only to her ankles. Starlight did not like

this one bit. He splashed around, swinging his head violently from side to side. When they were almost halfway across, he reared at the sight of the eddies, almost throwing off his rider. Julie held on tightly, desperately trying to keep to the ford. Starlight snorted and breathed quickly. His eyes were staring. Despite Julie's efforts, he broke away from the shallower waters, turning downstream.

"Come back, Starlight, come back. You'll drown."

Her horse began to panic in water which now reached halfway up his neck. He refused to face the oncoming eddies, struggling out of his depth, and trying to throw her.

"Help, father! Help!"

Her father and Black George galloped along the river bank.

"Hang on, Julie," shouted her father.

He spurred his horse into the water. He reached Starlight and grasped his reins. Black George gripped the other side. Between the two larger horses, Starlight was forced to turn.

"You be all right now. You be all right," comforted Black George.

The three horses struggled up the bank on to dry land. Mrs. Graham raced to meet them and jumped from her horse.

"Julie, Julie, are you hurt?" she said, hugging her daughter tightly without a thought for her own clothes which were getting wet.

"No, I'm fine," said Julie, trying to be brave, though she was still nervous from her frightening experience.

"What happened?" asked her father. "Was it too deep?"

"No, it only came up to my knees, but Starlight was frightened."

"Me go see him river how deep."

"Good, and see how strong the current is," her father answered.

"Will my horse be frightened, mummy?" asked Catherine, Julie's ten-year-old sister.

"Of course not, dear. You'll be all right as long as you do as you are told."

They re-mounted and rode back to the ford. Julie couldn't

help feeling rather a fool. Most weekends they went to the camp where her father kept his glider, as the launching site there was better than that at the homestead. Julie liked gliding and was certain she could fly, for her father, who had been in the Royal Australian Air Force in England during the war, had taught her. He used to sit beside her with his hands and feet off the controls while she flew the glider. She never had an accident, but he refused to let her fly solo. "Wait till you grow up and become more reliable," he would say.

Julie had tried ever so hard to be "reliable," but each time she dropped a saucer or stumbled over something, she sensed her father treating her like a little girl. Besides, she was over fourteen, old enough to have a gliding licence in Australia. She had not made any mistakes since they were last gliding, but just as she thought she was building up her father's confidence in her, she had to look silly by almost being drowned.

Back at the ford, Black George was soon across and shouted from the far bank: "Water him no ver' deep. But river him move fast."

Mr. Graham wheeled his horse to Catherine's pony. He lifted his youngest daughter on to his own horse in front of him and taking hold of the pony's reins, led it into the water. The pony struggled a little but, under the tight rein, behaved itself and forded the river successfully.

Julie was tempted to cross again, but realized that if Starlight bolted, her father would be furious and would continue to treat her like a little girl. Instead, she reluctantly allowed her reins to be taken by Black George who had recrossed to help them. Even Mrs. Graham rode up behind, watching her daughter carefully.

They trotted up the grassy slope on to a plain which had once been an airstrip, and galloped to the shed where they housed the glider. They slid off their saddles and kit, leaving the horses free to graze. Soon they had the camp laid, with the billy-cans bubbling and chickens turning on the spit over the camp fire. Julie's spare shorts and blankets were her only

JULIE WINS HER WINGS

kit not packed in waterproof bags. She had to borrow some clothes from her mother while hers were strung out to dry. They were obviously too big and though her father made no comment, she felt like a child in his eyes.

• After the fine lunch, Julie forgot her grievance. By now, her spare clothes had dried. They were clean because the river was clear, but they had the appearance of being ruffled and un-ironed. This pleased Julie, for although she loved to look pretty, she felt, with the wind in her hair, more rugged, more grown-up, like the cattle drovers at their farm.

They pushed the glider from the shed. Everyone, including little Catherine, helped. It was a Slingsby sailplane, silver in colour, a side-by-side two-seater, made in England. Julie pushed hard on her strut, hoping her father would notice how keen she was.

Neither her mother nor Black George liked gliding. Mrs. Graham preferred to sit in the fresh air and sew, though she did not mind driving the winch. The winch was needed for launching the glider. It was simply a revolving drum on which cable is wound, the drum being rotated by a small engine. When the end of the cable is attached to the distant glider and the winch started up, it will wind up the cable with great speed, thus pulling the glider so fast towards itself that the glider reaches flying speed. There was a quarter of a mile of cable on the Graham's winch. At the first signal from the person in the glider Mrs. Graham would start the winch working very slowly to draw the cable tight. At the second signal, when there was no chance of a violent snatch, she would increase the cable's speed until the glider was tearing down the runway and had taken off, soon after which the glider would release the cable. Black George had never been in the glider, and did not at all like the idea. To every invitation he would answer: "Hot sun him burn bad!"

Mr. Graham, with his wife, drove the winch (which was mounted on wheels like a lorry) to the edge of the plain, or rather plateau, for some fifty yards on, it dropped away in a precipitous cliff. Pulling from this point gave the plane a

better send-off. Black George teamed up the two largest horses, fastened the wire cable to the yoke between them, and with Mr. Graham pulled it to the waiting sailplane.

"In you go, Catherine," said her father.

Catherine climbed in beside him. Though she was sitting on a cushion, only her dark curly head showed over the side of the open cockpit. Black George lifted the wing-tip and held it level.

"Remember, Julie, one arm for 'Take Up Slack,' both arms for 'All Out!'"

Julie clenched her teeth. She had signalled dozens of times and still her father told her the simplest of things. She took two large table-tennis shaped bats, and swung one in a wide arc at her side. Away in the distance, the winch started. The cable tightened.

"All Out!" shouted Mr. Graham.

Julie swung both bats. The glider slid along the ground, gaining speed. Suddenly, like a huge kite it left the ground, climbed to its height and dropped the invisible cable, recognizable only by the little marker parachute at the end. Black George galloped to retrieve it.

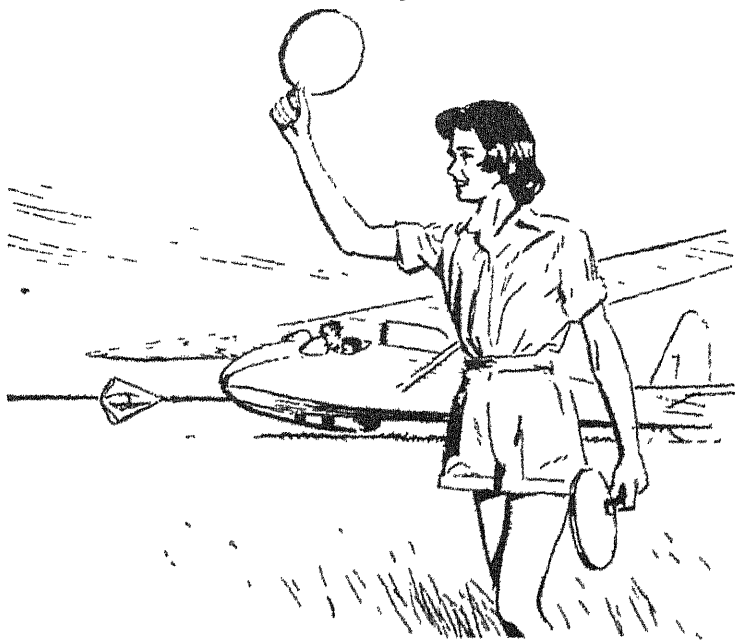
Julie walked to the far edge of the plain, opposite to the winch, where she knew her father would land. The glider flew over the winch and turned along the ridge. The easterly wind, blowing against the cliff face was deflected upwards, keeping the glider airborne. Even though it had no engine, it could fly back and forth along the ridge as long as the easterly wind held. Julie settled down for a long wait.

The sun glared from out of the summer sky. The grassy ridge, surrounded on three sides by the broad meandering river, stood above the Queensland Bush which stretched out in all directions. Only the Blue Mountains ridged the far western horizon. The scenery gave the impression that Australia was a vast country. Julie's thoughts turned to gliding. What fun it would be to fly in the Blue Mountains. In the stronger up-currents she could gain height—soar like a bird, then glide away, then soar, then glide and soar. The

JULIE WINS HER WINGS

Australian gliding championships would be held in Brisbane next year. Julie still longed to go. If she was successful, she could travel further afield, to New South Wales and Victoria, even New Zealand, South America or England. But the man she loved most, her father, still stood in her way.

Her dreams were interrupted by Black George. He unhooked the cable and left it ready for the next launch. Black



At her signal the towing cable slowly tightened.

George was said to be the finest horseman in Queensland. On their ranch he did the work of ten men. Though he was so tough he was a kind man. He always had something interesting to show Julie, such as how to track baby kangaroos or rescue lost koala bears.

"Do you think father should let me fly alone?" she asked.
"Flying to me is what riding is to you."

"You no fly now, weather him bad."

"But it is a beautiful day. There isn't a cloud in the sky."

"Bad weather him come soon. Him plenty mad. Black George know."

The glider circled the plain, crossed the river and with airbrakes out descended slowly to touch down about twenty yards from Julie. Black George fitted the cable. She had not time to ask him what he meant about the weather, but soon forgot the incident, putting it down to Black George's fear of flying.

She climbed into the cockpit. Her father helped to strap her in, and even this attention made her feel frustrated. She could strap herself in!

"Take up slack," shouted her father, "... all out!"

He sat back with his hands and feet off the controls, but he continually gave instructions. The glider slid along the ground.

"Stick slightly back," he said. "Climb gently to a safe height. Keep the wings level. Stick right back now. No more than sixty-five knots. Stick forward. Level out. Release cable. Keep straight ahead."

The instructions were calm and friendly, but boring. Under them Julie flew back and forth along the ridge; then did a wide circuit and a perfect touchdown, clear of little Cathy.

"Father," asked Julie, "would you mind this time if you let me fly without prompting me? I'm sure I can. If I do the wrong thing you can take the controls."

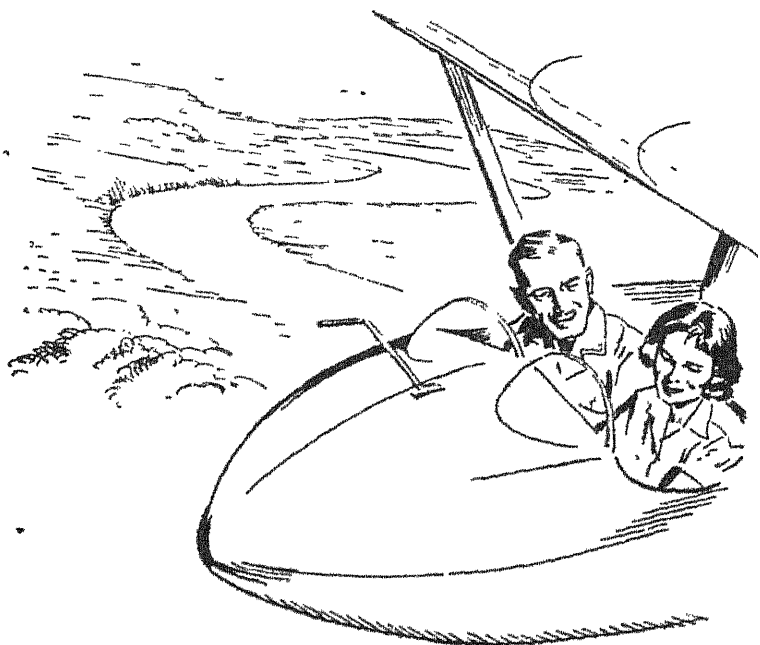
Her father laughed, but got ready to snatch the controls. The cable tightened, and Julie took off smoothly. She climbed at the right speed, levelled off, released the cable and flew back and forth in the up currents. For twenty minutes she stayed airborne.

"Let me see if you can land now."

Julie circled the plain, gradually losing height, swung across the broad river, and again touched down in the same place.

"Well done, Julie! I never guessed you could do it."

JULIE WINS HLR WINGS



"Let me see if you can land now," he said.

"You never let me show you before," thought Julie, but now she was feeling quite proud of herself. She had taken a big step forward. She might be able to persuade her father to let her fly solo before the end of the Christmas holidays. Time flew quickly. It was almost tea-time already.

"Can I fly on the last circuit and land near the shed?"

"Not today, Julie," answered her father. "It's Cathy's turn now, besides it's too dangerous and you're still young."

The last part of her father's sentence stung. She signalled off the glider, and walked slowly back to the shed. It seemed as though nothing she could do would convince him.

The glider landed at the shed and was put away. They all gathered at the camp and soon the camp-fire was burning again. After tea, the girls changed into prettier dresses. Now they could all enjoy a typical Australian Christmas Eve—like

a summer evening in England. They sang folk songs and carols around the wood fire in the evening sun. Black George pulled up a tree and planted it right inside the camp. On it they hung their presents to one another. These they would not open until the next morning.

Gradually the sun went down and the moon and stars came up. Catherine stifled a yawn. They had had a long day.



"Boss him hurt bad . . . dead tree hit him."

The camp beds were made up, and Julie and Catherine snuggled into their warm blankets.

Soon Julie, half dozing, let her mind wander to the Brisbane championships. She dreamed she was soaring along the ridge. She was not very heavy, and would have the advantage over other competitors. She knew where the up-currents were, and as long as the wind was in the right direction, she could glide all day. There was no reason why she could not beat the

JULIE WINS HER WINGS

world endurance record. After all, it had been won by a fourteen-year-old boy last year.

Excited voices interrupted her dreams.

"River him 'ver' mad. Him all round, move fast. Kangaroos run, birds fly."

"Come with me, Black George."

Julie heard the two men gallop away. She sat up. Her mother was out of bed.

"What's wrong, mother?"

"Go back to sleep, dear. The river is a little high, that's all. You're quite safe here. The whole of Queensland will have to be flooded before it reaches us."

Julie lay back but could not sleep. The wind had sprung up and she could hear the swirling river. So Black George had been right about the bad weather to come—however had he known? Thoughts sped through her mind. She tried to put them aside and sleep, but could not. The full moon bathed the countryside with its pale light. The wind blew stronger, almost to gale force. The river swirled as if it was a rapid.

A lone horse trotted on the plain. Julie could not stay in bed longer. She jumped up and put her bushjacket over her nightdress before her mother could stop her. Outside they found horse and rider. A body was slumped across the horse in front of Black George.

"Boss, him hurt bad. Him cross big river. Dead tree hit him. Horse cross river go walk-a-bout in Bush. I catch boss."

They lowered Julie's father to the ground, half conscious. He groaned as they moved him to his camp bed.

"Where are you hurt?" asked the mother.

The father did not reply, but slumped into unconsciousness. Mrs. Graham pulled away part of his torn shirt and felt his chest. It was soft, like jelly. Some of the ribs were broken. She brushed a tear from her eye and made him as comfortable as she could.

A lump came to Julie's throat as she remembered the nasty things she had thought about her father just because he was too kind. He must not die now. She felt her eyes grow moist.

She bit her lip, ran behind the shed and burst into tears.
 "You no cry. Cry no good."

She let Black George lead her to the fire. He rigged a tent over Mr. Graham's bed.

"I go now for flying doctor."

"Take care of yourself, Black George," said Mrs. Graham.

Julie and her mother heaped more logs on the fire. They made thick soup, but her father remained unconscious. Ten minutes later, Black George returned.

"No cross river. Him ver' bad."

All night long they stayed up with Mr. Graham. Black George frequently tried to cross the river but could not. When dawn broke they were almost worn out. Her father was shivering, his face and lips were blue, and his pulse had almost stopped. Her mother sobbed almost continually.

"I can cross the river, mother," said Julie.

"No, child, it's too dangerous."

"But I can glide right over it."

Her mother firmly shook her head. But Julie persisted: "It may be the only chance to save father. He may die." Still her mother refused. Mr. Graham grew weaker. Julie insisted it was the only thing they could do. It might be days before the river could be crossed.

At last her mother agreed, though very reluctantly. They pushed the glider out of its hangar and Mrs. Graham took up her place in the winch. Black George took the wing tip, Catherine signalled. Julie was not so confident now. The wind was very strong and she had not taken-off diagonally from the shed before.

The cable tightened. The glider slid away. Black George released the wing tip as late as he could. The opposite wing scraped the ground in the slight cross-wind, and the glider lurched into the air.

Julie was badly shaken by the take-off. She missed her father's comforting words. There was no time to lose. She pulled the joystick hard back to climb faster, but forgot the sixty-five knot limit. The cable broke. Immediately she

JULIE WINS HER WINGS

pushed the nose down and released the dragging line. The altimeter read just over three hundred feet. It was too low to circuit and land. She aimed at the edge of the ridge. For a while it looked as though the strong wind would hold her back so that she would touch down on the edge and run over the top.

Julie flew on. She was too low to have any alternative. The sailplane just cleared the winch. Mrs. Graham screamed.

"Julie, Julie, come back!"

Julie cleared the edge by ten feet. Immediately, she shot up a farther twenty feet, but was still too low to turn. She passed through the up-currents and began to sink again. She edged as close to the cliff face as she dare. Below, the raging river tore at the rocks. It would be suicide to have to land there.

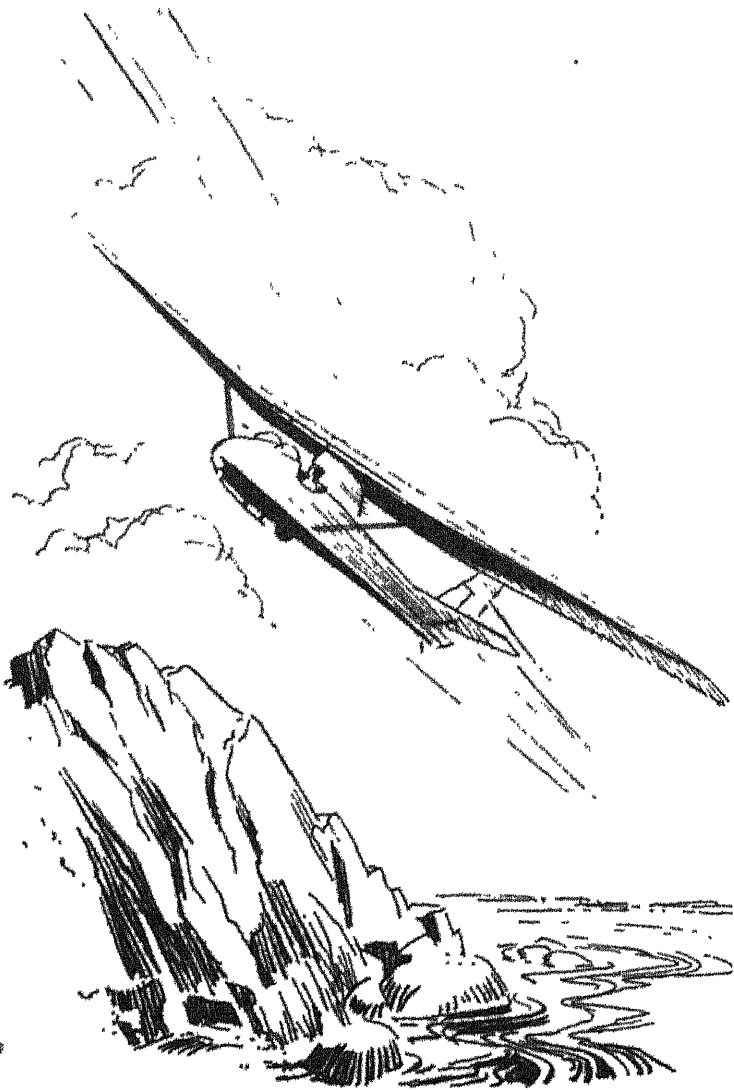
Slowly she began to climb. She was twenty feet above the level of the plain when she reached the end of the ridge. She had to turn again. Once out of the up-currents the sailplane lost its valuable height. Julie swung towards the menacing white rocks.

"Father, father!" she yelled helplessly.

But now she had a straight run in front of her. She soared above the level of the plain and climbed steadily to five hundred feet. Now she could turn comfortably. She gained more height until ten miles away, she could see her homestead beyond the Bush. When she could climb no higher she turned towards it.

The sailplane hurtled across the airstrip with the wind behind it. Julie hardly noticed the three figures staring up at her. Treacherous down-currents on the leeward side of the ridge lost her a few valuable feet as she shot through them. She could no longer see her homestead. It looked certain that she would have to crash-land.

The swollen river was now two miles broad but the sailplane had sufficient height to clear it. Ahead stretched out the monotonous Bush. Slightly to one side, buzzards circled with motionless wings! Julie headed towards them. She felt some lift. Below was a rocky clearing. The sun heated the hard



Below, the raging river tore at the rocks.

rocks, sending with currents a valuable hundred feet. No more.

She sailed towards it. The boat started. The sailplane was very light wind and gently landed under a large tree. Flipping off his seat, she there she quickly turned the radio.

"Graham Homestead to Flying Doctor
Graham Homestead to Flying Doctor

For ten minutes she anxiously waited.

"Flying Doctor, pass your message."

"My father has had an accident on River Road. I can't pick him up. He has broken his leg. Please, please, the floods."

There was a long pause.

"Doctor Rogers has just come in. We'll get him to pick him up in about half an hour. Stand by on this frequency for further news. By the way, Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas," answered Julie.

She slumped down into a chair. She was desperately tired, but pushed herself up again so as not to fall asleep. For the next six hours she anxiously paced the floor, tidied up, cooked a meal, washed and changed, not daring to stray far from the radio.

"Graham homestead, how do you hear?"

Julie dropped her embroidery.

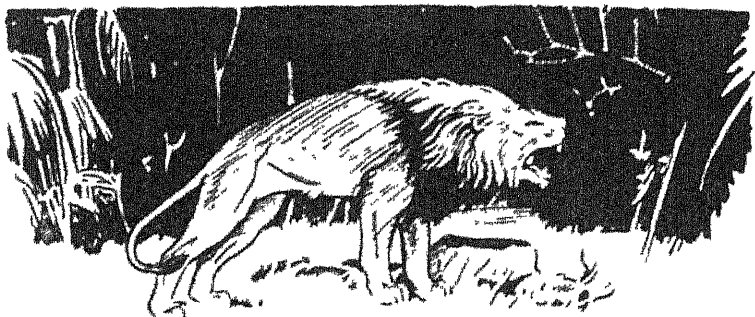
"Pass your message."

"We've picked up your father. We've stuck him in plaster but he'll be all right. We are pretty busy just now, but we'll fly the rest of your people home some time today. By the way, your father asked me to pass a message. What sort of sailplane would you like for the Brisbane championships?"

Julie's legs felt like jelly.

"A Skyl!" she answered softly.

She switched off the receiver, and slumped on to the settee into a deep sleep dreaming about her high-performance, single-seater sailplane.



African Man-eater

WILFRID ROBERTSON

THE sun had already risen and, from a cloudless sky, was shedding its golden light across the Rhodesian bush and forest. Its slanting rays shone upon the roof of the lonely farmhouse which Mr. Seton had built with the help of his African labourers, illumined the stretches of cultivated land that surrounded it, and cast grotesque shadows from the moving forms of cattle which had been released from their kraal and, in charge of a herdsman, were on their way to the usual grazing-ground.

Within the house five people were seated at breakfast. At one end of the table was Mr. Seton, a tall sunburned man of forty-five, with his wife opposite him. To his right sat his daughter Margaret, a fair-haired girl of seventeen, and beside her an old school friend who had recently come out from England to stay during the dry-season months. The fifth member of the party was Mr. Seton's white assistant, Jackson by name.

Halfway through the meal Mr. Seton referred to his intention, as things were slack just then, of taking a week off and

getting some shooting at an old camp of his in the wild and little-known country that lay to the north of the farm. Mrs. Seton and Jackson made no comment, for they had already been consulted in the matter; but Margaret turned her blue eyes towards her father and spoke.

"Oh, if you're going out into the bush, may Sybil and I come with you?" she asked. "I've never yet been camping with you, and I know Sybil is dying to see something of the game-animals and things that she can't see on the farm—beyond a few small buck, that is."

Mr. Seton laughed. "That's all very well, but I shall have other things to do besides acting nursemaid to a brace of irresponsible young girls!"

"That's a rotten thing to say!" retorted Margaret indignantly. "We're not irresponsible, we're practically grown up!"

Mr. Seton was about to speak again when his wife broke in. "Yes, why not, James? They'd enjoy it—do take them with you this time."

At his wife's plea Mr. Seton pursed his lips. "Well-l-l!" he said at length. "They *could* come with me, it's true, though I'm none too keen. It will mean taking more carriers for the extra kit and food stuffs, and a small tent for them to sleep in; they won't like dossing down in the open as I do. However——"

"Then we may?" cried Margaret eagerly.

"All right, I give in!" her father grudgingly agreed. "But remember, the distance is twenty-five miles on foot, along native paths, so if you both get footsore don't blame me, nor complain about having to live rough when we get there!"

The morning came for making a start. Previously Mr. Seton had covered the distance in a day, but with the girls in mind he planned to stop the first night at a waterhole a little more than halfway. Six or seven Africans, under Taka, the trustworthy boss-boy, assembled. Loads were apportioned, and, with Mr. Seton leading and the girls following, the party set out in single file along a winding native path.

Margaret and Sybil soon learned to adjust their stride to

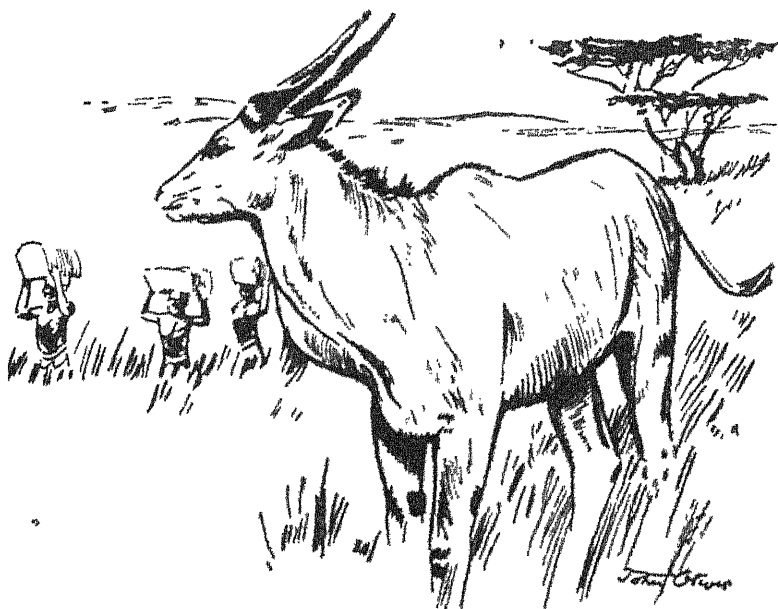
the pace of the others. Both were sensibly clad, with none of the hot breeches and garters so beloved by producers of film scenarios. They wore short skirts, stout shoes, and their heads well protected against the scorching rays of the African sun.

At a steady pace the column threaded its way along the narrow track between the endless ranks of trees, here and there crossing a *vlei* or shallow valley where the grass had already been burned off by the annual fires. Occasional harsh calls of pied hornbills and other birds were heard, but otherwise the bush seemed tenantless; a disappointment to Sybil who had been eagerly expecting constant glimpses of big game. Though Margaret's superior knowledge had warned her of the fact, she did not realize that practically all African animals lie up during the hotter part of the day, and only emerge from their shady retreats during the cooler hours near dawn and sunset.

Neither of the girls was sorry when a halt was called for the midday rest, as their legs were aching from the unaccustomed marching. They wisely said nothing about this, however, guessing the retort they would get from Mr. Seton about having begged to come!

The march continued, and as the sun sank towards the west Sybil had her desire. A huge eland bull, disturbed by the intruders, moved off into the trees before their advance; and a mile farther a dozen sable antelope were seen grazing in an open *vlei*. For a few moments the big black and white creatures gazed in surprise at the party before cantering away and disappearing from sight.

The camping spot for the night was reached, and the carriers put down their loads. Heedless of possible ants or scorpions, Margaret and Sybil flopped down on the ground with sighs of relief and surreptitiously slipped off their shoes. Meanwhile Mr. Seton set the natives to the usual routine of making camp. Fires were soon lighted and water fetched from the nearby pool. Dry grass was cut for sleeping upon, the tent which the girls were to occupy erected, and presently



Disturbed by the advancing column, an eland bull moved off.

a boiling kettle provided them with a welcome cup of tea.

The sun sank and night came on with the speed of the tropics. While the Africans cooked and ate their ration of coarse porridge round their own fire, Mr. Seton and the girls seated themselves on their blanket-rolls and made a good meal from some cooked meat brought from the farm, finishing off with bread and jam and another pot of tea. Beds were made up, and at Mr. Seton's suggestion Margaret and Sybil turned in early.

Though sleeping in the open was as novel to Margaret as it was to her companion, she dropped off almost at once. Sybil, on the other hand, lay awake for some time, conscious of her strange surroundings. The scene visible through the open flap of the tent fascinated her. The flickering light of the camp-fires shone redly on the surrounding trees, intensifying the blackness beyond. In the foreground was her host's

motionless figure, seated on his blanket, and finishing a pipe; while beyond him the group of Africans squatted round their cooking fire, with the red light gleaming on their teeth and eyeballs as they talked in low tones.

Overhead a galaxy of unfamiliar stars shone down; while from the encircling bush came a medley of strange sounds—the yap of a jackal, the weird note of a questing hyena, and the shrilling of insects in the undergrowth. Once from far away came a deep boom of a lion that gave her an uncomfortable thrill; but she saw that Mr. Seton, beyond a casual glance in that direction, took no notice, so concluded that there was nothing to worry about.

At length Sybil's brown eyes closed, and she knew no more until Margaret awakened her with a shake and she realized that the sky was lightening and the camp was astir.

The following afternoon, as the party descended a slope, Mr. Seton pointed towards a line of bright green trees at the bottom which marked the course of a stream. "That's the spot where we're going to spend our week," he said. "And yonder is Mavura's village," he added, indicating the conical thatched roofs of a group of some twenty huts a quarter of a mile away. "Mavura knows me well, and is always ready to supply labour for bringing in what I may shoot in exchange for some of the meat."

The chosen spot was reached. Loads were set down and fires lighted. Both Margaret and Sybil realized that the place was attractive. There was plenty of shade yet it was not too shut in by trees, and in front the ground sloped down towards the stream where a pool dotted with the mauve flowers of water-lilies supplied an essential need.

The freshly-filled kettle was hardly boiling when Mr. Seton cried out: "Hullo, here's the whole village coming to see us." Not the whole village perhaps but a considerable group were to be seen approaching. In front walked the headman Mavura, a skinny old man wrapped in a kaross of cat skins. He was followed by half a dozen villagers carrying spears and casting uneasy glances round them as they approached.



Not the whole village perhaps, but a considerable group led by the headman were approaching.

After saluting Mr. Seton and the girls, Mavura produced a small bowl of eggs—the customary present—and launched into a lengthy speech accompanied by much gesticulation.

Sybil, being a stranger to the country, naturally could not understand a word, and even Margaret, though she knew enough of the local tongue to give orders to house-boys, soon lost the thread of what was being said. But from the expression on her father's face, and the muttered "ohs" and "ahs" of Taka and the carriers who had paused in their work to listen,

she soon realized that something was very definitely amiss.

Mr. Seton made a brief reply to the effect that he would do what he could, and as soon as Mavura and his followers had departed he turned to the girls.

"This is an unpleasant development," he said. "Did you understand what Mavura said? No? Well, it seems that there's a lion around that's turned man-eater, and during the last ten days has seized no less than three women going down to fetch water, plus a child playing on the outskirts of the village. They're all terrified, and want me to hunt it down and shoot it."

Both Margaret and Sybil looked startled, the latter especially so, for this sort of thing was completely outside her experience.

"It's you two being here that worries me," Mr. Seton went on. "I ought to take you both straight back to the farm and out of possible danger, but I don't see how I can possibly up-anchor and clear out, leaving these poor beggars in the lurch."

"Of course not --don't bother about us," said Margaret with a confidence she did not feel, while Sybil did not trust herself to speak lest her voice should betray her.

"Mind you, I don't think there's any real risk as long as we take precautions," continued Mr. Seton. He beckoned to Taka and gave an order.

Taka and his companions had been expecting this and obeyed with alacrity. Seizing axes they hastened into the surrounded bush and reappeared dragging thorny branches and even whole trees. These they piled in a circle, and vanished to fetch a fresh supply. Before sunset the camping-spot was protected by a thick and formidable fence, with only a narrow gap as entrance which could be blocked by some extra branches laid ready for the purpose.

"That makes things feel more comfortable," remarked Mr. Seton to Sybil and his daughter as he surveyed the finished job. "Cramped quarters, perhaps, to contain us all; but much better than lying awake half the night, starting at every

rustle in the undergrowth," he added with a reassuring laugh.

Both round the natives' fire, and beside that of the white people, the misfortune which had befallen Mavura's village was discussed. Sybil remembered her host's apparent indifference to that roar of a lion heard on the previous night, and presently asked a question.

"One hears lions most nights in the bush," was her host's reply. "Normally there's nothing to worry about, for the beasts fear the scent of human beings and keep well away. But—and a big 'but' this—when a lion from age or injury is unable to catch game, and in desperate hunger seizes some unarmed native, then there's trouble! It loses its fear of man and gains vastly in cunning."

"Those villagers all have spears, and probably an old gun or two," put in Margaret. "Why don't they track it down and kill it themselves?"

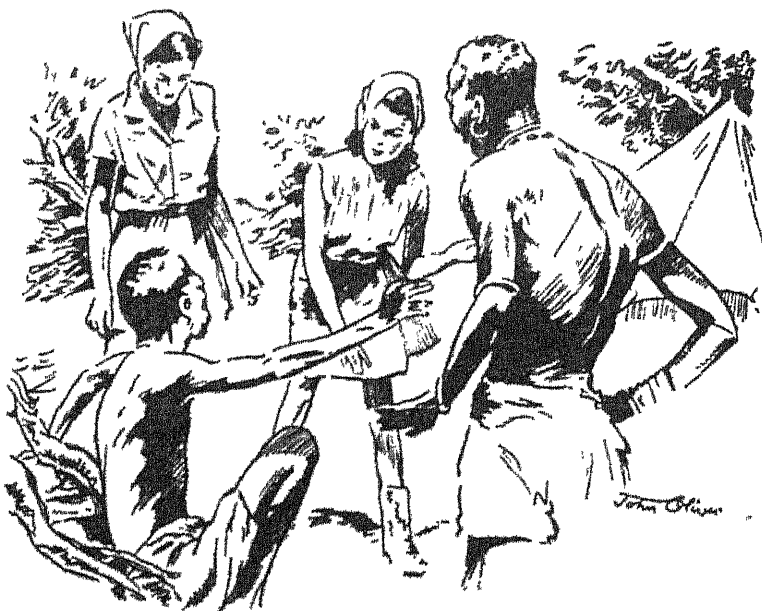
"Most likely they think it isn't a 'real' lion, but some human wizard who has assumed a lion's form to raid the village," replied her father. "Like the werewolf stories of medieval Europe, you know. Oh yes, such superstition can be very strong, and often results in some inoffensive old man being murdered by order of the local witch-doctor. It's happened before and will happen again!"

"How beastly!" cried both girls together.

"So you see it's up to me to get the brute," said Mr. Seton. "And now you two had better turn in, or you'll be having bad dreams if we go on discussing the subject any more!"

The dawn was just breaking when a high-pitched call, by which Africans can shout news incredible distances, sounded from the village. Though unintelligible to Mr. Seton, Taka caught the gist of it. "Master! The lion tried to break into a hut last night!" he reported, "and, though it didn't get anyone, they say it's still somewhere near."

"I'll go at once!" Mr. Seton turned to the girls. "Stay here inside the fence, you two, and don't on any account go wandering round outside!" So saying he snatched up his rifle and hurried away.



He darted inside and crouched down like an exhausted animal.

Sybil saw their protector disappear with some alarm, but Margaret, as an "old resident" in the country, reassured her. "We'll be all right," she said. "And anyway there's that!" She pointed to her father's shotgun, brought for getting an occasional bird for the pot, lying beside his blankets. "I know how to use it, and can load and fire it if needed. The noise ought to scare anything, and the sound of the report will bring him back in no time."

About an hour later, just as the girls had finished the breakfast which the cook-boy had prepared for them, a panting figure arrived outside the entrance of the brushwood *boma*. It was that of an elderly man clad only in a loincloth, and he held out appealing hands as if asking for help. On seeing him Margaret told Taka to go and find out what he wanted.

Taka did so, and presently came back to report. "He says

he wants the white master to protect him. Shall I tell him to go away and not be a fool?"

Margaret would probably have agreed to that suggestion had she not remembered what her father had said on the previous evening about the unpleasant habit of fastening the blame for the man-eater on some unfortunate individual. It struck her that possibly the fellow had been named by the local witch-doctor, and had somehow learned what was in the wind. "Let him come in," she ordered.

Taka looked surprised, but made a gesture to the fugitive. The latter wasted no time. He darted inside the *boma* and crouched down against the fence like a hunted and exhausted animal which feels it has found a safe refuge at last.

It was not long before another visitor arrived, an unpleasant-looking middle-aged African accompanied by a couple of men carrying spears. He seemed to know well enough that Mr. Seton was absent, for he would have marched in as if he owned the place had not Taka, knowing his duty, barred the way. "What do you want?" he demanded.

The newcomer halted, the expression on his face showing his surprise at being thwarted by someone he considered of no account. "We seek an evil man who has fled in this direction and who is no doubt hiding here," he said. Then, catching sight of the two girls he added: "I have come to take him away before he causes harm to the white chief's women."

Though still barring the way, Taka cast a questioning glance over his shoulder. Prompted by anger at the man's insolence rather than fear, Margaret's response was to pick up her father's shotgun, slip in a couple of cartridges, and step forward. Sybil, feeling vaguely alarmed and not understanding what had been said, followed her.

"Take yourself off and be quick about it!" ordered Margaret, stressing her order with a significant gesture with the gun-barrels.

The witch-doctor, for such he was, gave her a venomous scowl, but at the same time he did not like the determined look on her face. He stepped back.

"Go on clear out, or I'll give you a dose of shot!"

The two men with spears had already retired hastily, and the unwelcome visitor decided that the odds were against him. He retreated to the edge of some thick bush where he felt he would be out of range of the gun, and from there shouted that he had seen the spoor of the man-eater coming



He did not much like the determined look on her face.

this way and it had changed into human footprints. What more proof was needed that the fugitive was indeed a wizard?

Meanwhile he had no intention of abandoning his purpose. Having reached a spot where he felt himself safe he waited hopefully.

Then something happened which he had not expected. A tawny form sprang from the undergrowth behind him and landed full on his shoulders. There was a scream of terror and

the next moment the man-eater had disappeared again into the undergrowth with its victim.

Pandemonium followed. The witch-doctor's escort fled yelling; while within the *boma* the carriers sprang to their feet, the fugitive burrowed deeper into the thorns, and both Margaret and Sybil cried out at what they had seen.

Gun in hand, Margaret made a step forward as if she intended to run out into the open in pursuit of the killer. But, though scared, Sybil had the presence of mind to clasp hold of her friend from behind; while Taka, his black face gone grey with fright and the burden of responsibility during his master's absence, sprang in front of her with arms outstretched. The next moment Margaret herself realized how suicidal was her thought of following with a weapon loaded only with small bird-shot. She turned back with a shudder, and wiped away the sweat which had gathered on her brow.

It was Taka who made the first sensible suggestion. "Fire off the gun, mistress, fire it in the air, so that the master will hear the noise and come back quickly!"

"Yes, that's what you must do!" urged Sybil, guessing the gist of what Taka had said by his expressive gestures.

Margaret half raised the weapon, and then lowered it. "Those two who bolted yelling will bring Father back fast enough, while if I fire the bang will scare off that brute of a lion, and it may be days and weeks before another chance comes of getting it. We want it killed—not frightened away!"

Silence fell between them, and those within the protection of the fence became aware of a horrible sound of tearing and crunching coming from beyond the belt of undergrowth into which the lion had disappeared. Though none felt much, if any, sympathy for the victim, the noise was a blood-chilling one. Sybil clapped her hands over her ears and Margaret shuddered again, while the carriers muttered nervously among themselves and even Taka looked as if he were about to be sick.

Relief came suddenly. There was a patter of booted steps, followed by the pad of bare feet, and Mr. Seton appeared

with half a dozen armed villagers behind him. "What's been happening here?" he ejaculated as he reached the entrance of the *homa*.

In a few words Margaret told him, while Taka, now quivering with eagerness, pointed out exactly where the lion and its victim had vanished. Mr. Seton, his rifle held ready for instant use, made off in that direction; while Margaret and Sybil, finding their knees no longer able to support them now that the strain they had been undergoing was lifted, staggered across to their blankets and sat down.

The sharp crack of a rifle-shot rang out, followed by a second; and then a wild yell of triumph from the villagers who had followed close behind Mr. Seton told the listeners that all danger was at an end. Mr. Seton reappeared, a look of satisfaction on his face. A moment later the enclosure was empty except for the girls, for Taka and the other natives, including the man who had fled inside for refuge, had rushed forth to inspect the brute that they knew to be dead and no longer a menace.

Mr. Seton crossed over to where the girls sat. He laid down his rifle, and kneeling, put an arm round each. "You're all right now," he said. "The thing's dead—a mangy old brute as I suspected. Don't you worry any more."

Margaret nodded without speaking, and Sybil gave a wan smile.

To give time for them to recover, Mr. Seton went on talking. "Those fools at the village were more a hindrance than a help—they were too scared to help me properly in trailing the spoor. Luckily I was only a few hundred yards away when I heard yells coming from this direction, and raced back. Now if you both feel better tell me what's been happening at this end."

Margaret took up the tale, describing the arrival of the fugitive, the stand she had taken against those who followed him, and the final scene when the lion had sprung from the undergrowth. "I'm certain it was as you said last night," she added, "and that the man who fled here would have been

AFRICAN MAN-EATER



A tawny form sprang from the undergrowth behind him.

killed because of superstition. They thought he was a wizard in the shape of the lion. Ask him—he's crouching over there."

Mr. Seton turned his head. Besides themselves there was not a soul within the enclosure.

"Then he must have run off with the others!" cried Margaret. "You must go after him, Father, or they'll do for him!"

Mr. Seton laughed. "No fear of that now!"

"Why?" asked both girls together.

"Because the wizard—if he was a wizard—should have dropped dead at the same instant I killed the lion. The fact that the man is still alive proves that he's not what they thought. Get the idea? He's as safe now as the Bank of England!"

With another laugh Mr. Seton rose to his feet. "And now I suppose you'll be wanting me to take you back to the farth right away?"

"No!" ejaculated Margaret firmly, and her decision was echoed by Sybil. "We wanted to come, and we're staying the week as arranged!"

"Then all I can say is that you've both got guts and I'm very proud of you!" exclaimed Mr. Seton heartily and kissed them both.



Gruffy's Adventure

JOHN MONTGOMERY

SINCE we found Gruffy we have learned a great deal about dogs. Did you know, for instance, that the average age for a dog in England, without counting deaths among young puppies, is less than four years? Road accidents and sickness keep the average low. But Gruffy is now six, and he looks like enjoying his twelfth birthday.

From the first we determined to control Gruffy, for his own sake. And within a few months we had taught him to understand the meaning of a limited vocabulary, so that he recognized the following words:

Wait	Mouse	Up	Watchdog
Come here	Seek	Down	Basket
Walk	Ball	Good dog	Bed
Lead	Speak	Bad dog	Swimming
Collar	Dinner	Guard	Motor Car
Bone	Go out	Chocolate	Sit
	Sleep	Cheese	

Directly he hears the command *Wait* he stands quite still, and waits patiently, until he is told to move again, or until he is put on the lead. In an emergency, the command is extremely useful. But there was one occasion on which the command *Wait* had no effect on Gruffy. And it very nearly cost him his life.



He thought he saw Pat on the other platform.

GRUFFY'S ADVENTURE

We went together one evening to meet Pat at the station. Gruffy ran ahead over the Heath, and when we arrived near the station I put him on the lead. It was early, and there were several minutes to wait before the train came in, so I let Gruffy off the lead and let him run around in the yard. When the London train came in Gruffy was on the far side of the yard, sniffing at some bushes. Everything seemed all right. But suddenly, before I had a chance to stop him, he had dashed through the station entrance on to the platform. Frantically, I rushed after him shouting out "Gruffy! Gruffy, Wait! Wait!"

But it was too late. Gruffy was already on the platform, and before I could catch hold of him, he had jumped down *on to the line*. The train had gone, but he thought he recognized Pat on the far platform. At that moment Pat was crossing the footbridge, and as he looked down, he saw Gruffy on the line.

It was a terrible moment. Gruffy jumped carefully over each line, and then seemed to realize that he had made a mistake about Pat being on the other platform. He therefore turned and started to come back. It was all over in a second, but as he turned he caught the electric line with one of his back legs. I had been calling him, frantically, desperately. As the electric shock ran through him he screamed, and with a tremendous effort pulled himself free, and jumped high on to the platform. Then, still screaming, he ran off through the station on to the Heath, with me after him.

A porter stopped me.

"That your dog?" he asked.

I nodded, quite unable to say anything, fearful for Gruffy, terribly upset that he should have been hurt because I did not have him safely on his lead.

"He went up there," said the porter. "Probably dead by now, up in the woods."

I could not answer, but ran frantically up on to the Heath and into the dark. My first thought was that he might be lying somewhere, dying of shock. My second was that if he could get there, he would probably make for home. I there-

fore ran as fast as I could along the path towards the cottage, calling his name as I went. I don't think anyone has ever covered that particular quarter of a mile so quickly.

There was no sign of Gruffy outside the front door. Desperately, I called his name, and was just going to turn back, when suddenly he yelped, and there he was at my feet.

He had been waiting outside the back door. He was shaking all over with shock. His tail was right down between his legs.

"Oh, Gruffy," I said, and grasped hold of him, almost crying with relief.

"Poor Growler. Are you all right? Let's have a look at you."

Two minutes later he was lying on my bed, with blankets around him. There was no sign of damage, except for the smallest burn, the size of a sixpence, on his coat. I sat with him for an hour, stroking him, and talking to him while he shivered. I could not escape from the feeling of guilt, that Gruffy should be hurt because of my carelessness. But my relief at finding him relatively unharmed was overwhelming.

As for Gruffy, he just lay back, and licked my hand, grateful for the attention and the sympathy. Perhaps he understood that it had all been an accident, and thought that it wasn't worth making so much fuss about.

Bill the porter, who had been off duty at the time, was inclined to agree.

"You don't want to worry," he said. "Lots of dogs get on to the line, and they don't get hurt. Cures them, it does. Makes them keep away."

He was right. The Growler does not go near the station now unless he is taken there on the lead. And even then he protests. What is more, he thinks twice before disobeying when we call out WAIT! He remembers the railway. And so do I.



Mark Missing

LOIS LAMPLUGH

IT WAS only the beginning of July, but as Meg Hudson walked across the park to the station she crunched fallen leaves underfoot, brown and crisp as cornflakes, and the short grass was the colour of hay. Since early April it had been dry and hot, day after day, with only an occasional night-time thunder-shower. People said it was the hottest summer for twenty years, or twenty-five, or thirty, according to age and taste. Meg, at fifteen, supposed she could only actually remember twelve or thirteen summers, and found it galling not to have any record heat-wave in her whole life to compare with this.

From the train windows she saw a bleached countryside, quivering in the heat. It looked as though if anyone dropped a lighted match anywhere, there would be a blaze like a bush fire she had seen in a film about the Australian out-back. It

didn't seem quite natural; it certainly didn't seem English.

Meg was a weekly boarder, travelling the twenty miles to school on Monday mornings and travelling back again on Friday afternoons. It was an arrangement that she thought made the best of both worlds. She felt rather sorry for her brothers, who were away at school all the term.

On this Friday afternoon, tea was ready as usual when she reached home, but she said to her mother, "I'm not hungry.



The roof was gone; the old oak overhung the ruin.

Do you mind if I just have a drink of lemonade and take an apple out with me?"

"No, it's too hot to eat much," Mrs. Hudson agreed.

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, just over the fields."

"All right, dear."

Meg felt that if she had said, "Up to London," or "Over to France," her mother would still have said, "All right, dear," because she had asked the question automatically and not listened to the answer. For years she had been used to her children going off into the landscape on foot or on bicycles as soon as they came back from school, and returning without mishap, more or less in time for meals or bed. Meg always went out on Friday evenings if it was fine and light.

MARK MISSING

She had nothing against school except that it was in a town, and when she came home she liked to get the feel of the country again as soon as possible.

Today she wandered down to the stream that flowed at the bottom of the garden. It was shallower than she had ever seen it. She followed it through a gap in the hedge into meadows pitted with sun-baked hoof-prints, and then turned away from the water and began to climb a slope towards a coppice. Suddenly she realized that she was making for the small ruined stone barn on the furzy hill-top she could see from her bedroom window. A few years earlier this had been a favourite place for dreaming and reading. Lately she had thought she had grown out of it, but it was as though, in the drowsy sun-spell of this evening, she was being drawn towards it.

The hill grew steeper and she climbed slowly along a narrow track through bracken and bramble. Higher up was gorse; she stopped and stared at the web of cracks in the burned earth under the gorse stems. Perhaps, she thought hazily, this was the Australian out-back; perhaps, in this amazing, unreal summer, time and the world had shifted. When she reached the top, the barn might have vanished.

But it was there as solid as ever, she soon saw: a stony ruin built goodness knows how long ago, at a time when the half-acre around it had been pasture land, probably, instead of a furzy waste. Its thatched roof and rafters had long since fallen in and rotted away, but its walls had only lost a few upper stones. An oak tree held out a long branch over it; Meg had sometimes seen an owl roosting in the oak at dusk, and she called it to herself the Owl Tree.

She paused in the gaping door-space wondering why she had come. She had never before felt afraid of the place—in fact had always been attracted by it—but for a moment she had an uneasy sense that something terrifying was going to happen here.

A slight sound from one corner of the barn made her jump. She stared into the weedy shadows. Tramps, gipsies, escaped

criminals . . . ? She relaxed, smiled to herself and went forward. Looking like a ball of cotton wool lay a white kitten in a flattened dry grass bed, and beside it were three others, less easy to distinguish because they were tabbies. A farm cat must have gone wild and had this litter here, Meg thought, and left them for a while to hunt food.

They looked to be about a fortnight old. She bent and picked up the white one. Immediately she nearly dropped it. It was like holding an exploding box of matches. Desperate with terror, the tiny creature scratched, spat and hissed.

She put it down and stood gazing at the kittens with amusement. "Well, you are a wild lot," she said. "You're worse than foxes. I suppose you've never seen a human being before."

Then she heard another sound and swung round to stare through the doorway. Someone was moving among the gorse bushes at one end of the barn.

Meg crept to a hole in the wall on that side and peered through. She frowned. "I'm giving myself frights for nothing," she muttered. "It's only Amanda. I wonder what *she's* doing up here."

Amanda was her cousin. If Mrs. Hudson was apt to be a trifle vague, and not listen to the answers to questions she had asked, her sister Lavinia, Amanda's mother, was a great deal worse. She painted in water-colours, sketched in pastels, and wore old-fashioned, trailing, arty clothes. She was liable to recite poetry at considerable length at the least opportunity, and affected a dreamy, other-worldly manner.

Amanda recited poetry too—dramatic poetry, for the most part. She wanted to go on the stage, and pictured herself as a great tragic actress. But as Meg's younger brother had once said, "She's always *dramatizing about*, but if she ever got a real part she'd probably forget what theatre she was acting at, and what time the play started, and her lines as well."

Amanda was tall and dark haired and tried to look languorous. At the moment, as Meg watched her, she was wandering over the brow of the hill in the direction of the

MARK MISSING

Hudsons' house. I suppose she's looking for me, Meg thought with annoyance. She wished, not for the first time, that her cousin did not live so near.

When the barn had been her favourite place she had never told Amanda about it—she never told Amanda anything if she could help it—and she did not intend to tell her about the kittens. So she went by a roundabout way through the gorse bushes to come out lower down the hill.



Always dramatic, Amanda wheeled around: "Meg, how you startled me!" she cried.

At sight of her Amanda stopped dead and clutched her throat with one hand. "Meg! *How* you startled me!" she cried.

"Not as much as all that, surely," said Meg calmly. "Were you coming to see us!"

"Yes—I wanted to ask—have you seen Mark?"

Mark was her younger brother. In his short life of three

years Mark had been lost three times. It was hard to tell whether he wandered off in a bold spirit of adventure or because he inherited the family vagueness. Whatever the reason, he seemed to use his expeditions as opportunities for long refreshing sleeps. He had been found fast asleep in a haystack, in the back seat of a stranger's car, and in a dilapidated wooden hut in the dunes near his home.

"Oh, Amanda, have you let him get lost *again*?" Meg exclaimed. "Where was he when you saw him last?"

"In the little old quarry in the Barrow Field. I took him up there for a picnic."

"Haven't you been to school today?"

"Yes, this morning, but on Friday afternoons we only have that wearisome gymnastic nonsense, and Mother wanted to go to her Art Circle meeting, so she asked Miss Evans if I could come home early."

Amanda went to a local private school where everyone did a good deal of weaving, Greek dancing, pottery and barbola work, but never seemed to pass G.C.E.

Meg sighed and looked at her watch. It was twenty past six. "What time did you last notice Mark?" she asked.

"Oh, about an hour and a half ago, I suppose. And then I began to read *Antony and Cleopatra*—well, I was learning some of Cleopatra's speeches by heart—and I became so absorbed in it that I simply didn't see where Mark went. He must have slipped away. You know what he is."

"Yes, and *you* know what he is, Amanda, so you ought to have been more careful."

Meg heard her own voice sounding priggish and disapproving, and felt all the more annoyed with her cousin. But it was true: Amanda should have taken better care of Mark. So far all his adventures had ended happily but one day—today, perhaps—he might so easily run into danger.

• Barrow Field was about a mile from where they were standing. How far would a little boy of three walk in an hour and a half?—providing he *was* walking, and not already asleep, or playing some game.

MARK MISSING

"He might have got bored and gone home, I suppose," she said. "When will your mother be back?"

"At almost any moment now. And if Mark's not there—I'll have to tell her. Oh *Meg!*"

"Well, we'll turn out to search, of course," Meg said, thinking that this was the fourth time. "I'll tell them at home what's happened and then go out and work towards Barrow Field from the north, in a big circle. You'd better go back by a different way—along the stream, say—and make sure Mark's not safe after all. And if he is, for goodness' sake don't forget to ring us up and let us know. You'll tell the police if you don't find him in an hour or two, will you?"

Amanda nodded. For once she was forgetting to act; the strained and troubled expression on her face was entirely sincere. Meg, turning to go down the hill towards home, felt sorry for her.

She found her parents in the garden and told them the news.

"Oh, it's too bad!" Mrs. Hudson exclaimed. "A great girl like Amanda—how old is she, sixteen?—and she can't look after Mark for half a day without letting him get lost."

"I'll get the car out," her husband said. "I'll go down and see what's happening, and telephone you at once, whether Mark has been found or not. If he hasn't, I'll start looking from that end."

When he had gone, Mrs. Hudson said: "I'll make some sandwiches for us both, Meg. We'll need them if we're going to be walking over the fields for another two or three hours."

While she was cutting the sandwiches, the phone rang, and Meg answered it. It was her father, to say that Mark was still missing.

"We're fanning out towards Barrow Field from the south and west," he said. "Amanda tells me you're going to track around on the north side. Tell Mother that she could help best by walking straight down the main road to the village and asking everyone she meets if they've seen Mark. With the place as full of holiday makers as it is, anyone might have

spotted him. By the way, he's wearing blue shorts and a blue and white striped T-shirt."

Meg and her mother, each with a packet of sandwiches, set out on their separate ways.

This time Meg crossed the stream-side meadows and climbed the steep pasture on the east side of the hill. She had remembered noticing a field of barley beyond the hawthorn hedge that bordered the waste ground on which the ruined barn stood. A small boy might plunge deep into the sheltering corn, make himself a nest among the stems and sleep there.

She circled the field, looking for a trampled path, however narrow, but could see none. Finally she climbed a hedge and gazed across the almost motionless golden lake of the barley, but there was no dip in it anywhere.

She went on over the summer evening fields. She was naturally long-sighted, and from this high ground she could see a long way, but nowhere was there a small moving dot in blue and white that could be Mark. Where was he? Which way would he have gone? Could he have fallen somewhere and hurt himself? Oh, if only Amanda had not buried herself in her day-dreams of playing Cleopatra!

Meg circled several more cornfields, searched haystacks and ditches, and enquired at one or two farm houses and cottages. As the coppery sun began to sink behind the far-off horizon of the Atlantic, she sat on a gate and ate her sandwiches. She had not met any of the other searchers, but now she thought she caught sight of her uncle and Amanda about a mile away, near the cliffs. Dusk was deepening fast, and she felt tired, and could not think where to look next.

She decided to call at her uncle's house and see if there was any news. As she walked along the village street she made out in the faint light the figure of her mother ahead of her, and ran to catch her up.

"Mrs. Hudson turned and, speaking together, they eagerly asked each other if anything had been heard of Mark.

"No," said Meg, drooping, and her mother echoed, "No. I went back to the house about twenty minutes ago and there



While Meg's father 'phoned, the searchers talked in groups.

was nothing. They've told the police. I've just been to ask Mr. Mounsey, at the Queen's Arms, to make an announcement in the bar about Mark and ask for volunteers to help search. We'd better go home now, Meg."

"Go home! But we can't. We must go on till Mark is found."

"We'll go on at first light tomorrow. We'll be more use when we've had a few hours' sleep. The men will hunt on tonight."

"I shan't sleep," said Meg mutinously. "How can we? It's—it's heartless."

"Not heartless, I hope, just sensible," her mother said. "I can't have you wandering about all night, anyway."

As Mr. Hudson drove them both home, Meg resolved that

she would stay awake until her mother had had time to go to sleep, and then slip out again. But she was more tired than she realized. She lay down on her bed to wait—and when she woke, knew angrily that an hour or so had passed.

The luminous hands of her clock showed that it was past midnight. It was still very hot; probably the heat had woken her. She glanced towards the window—and was out of bed in an instant. The furzy hillside below the ruined barn was on fire.

The kittens? The thought of them put everything else out of her head. She must reach the barn before the fire did. She had lain down half-dressed, and it only took her two minutes to put on shorts and a cotton blouse. Just as she was about to slide her feet into sandals, she changed her mind and took a pair of old plimsolls from a corner instead.

Next she cast about her for something to put the kittens in, and saw a plaited rush basket, with handles and a lid, that Aunt Lavinia had brought back for her from Spain. With a sudden memory of reading about people wrapping wet cloths over their mouths and noses before rushing into burning buildings, she dropped her towel into the basket.

Then she slipped out of the house by the french windows of the sitting-room and ran down the garden and along the stream path for the third time in a few hours.

She waded across the stream and dipped the towel in the water. As she hurried up the steep field in her squelching shoes she watched the fire anxiously. It seemed to be spreading fast. She wondered how it had started. In this tinder-dry countryside it would have been enough for some late-strolling holiday-maker to have thrown down a smouldering cigarette stub.

She wondered what the mother cat was doing. As the kittens were too young to walk, would she be trying to carry them to safety in her mouth, one at a time?

The smell of the fire was strong and pungent as a hundred autumn bonfires, and its heat poured over her like a wave as she drew near. It looked as though it had broken out near



Come what may Meg felt driven to her work of rescue.

the bottom of the hill and spread upwards. Now she could see the back of the barn. Flames were running out towards it on two sides. If only the doorway was still free!

And then she heard a sound that jerked her to a stop in horror. For an instant she thought it was the wail of a cat; a moment later she recognized it as the terrified cry of a child. Was it Mark? But where was he? Lost among the fiery gorse stems? She called:

"Mark! Mark, where are you?"

The cry came again and she relaxed a little. He was in the barn—protected from the fire for a little while. But she must get him out quickly or he would suffocate.



* *She swung out along the branch of the old oak.*

Smoke and sparks and woody ash swirled round her as she ran on and struggled through the hazel saplings of the hedge between the field she was in and the waste ground.

"I'm coming, Mark. It's Meg," she shouted, but there was no answer.

A few moments more and she could see the doorway. The grass and brambles around it were on fire. Watching the flames, she remembered the uneasiness she had felt as she went into the barn the afternoon before. The unknown thing she had feared then was happening now.

Dimly in the fire-glow she could make out a small form crouched against the far wall. Her glance travelled up to the oak tree hanging over the barn. It stood on the only side still free from fire. Tonight her Owl Tree was going to have a use.

She ran to the foot of it, threw the wet towel over one arm, slid the handles of the basket up the other, and began to climb.

Her damp shoes slipped on the bark, but hand- and foot-holds were easy, and soon she was gripping the branch that stretched over the barn. She swung down and dropped into stifling heat. Landing on hands and knees she turned at once to Mark. He was huddled up, not even sobbing now. But he was conscious; when she touched him he cowered away. No wonder, she thought, if he saw me dropping down like a bat. He doesn't recognize me; he's too frightened to take anything in.

"It's Meg," she said again. "Come to take you home to bed. Look, this is cool, wrap it round you."

She put the towel over his shoulders and looked out of the door. A flame was flickering into the dried-up weeds inside the barn. She stamped it out and stared up at the surrounding glow. What was she to do? She couldn't climb out carrying Mark. Oh, if only someone would come—surely the fire had been seen by now! But of course no one knew that there was any living thing in the ruined barn.

She could hardly breathe and she felt panic-stricken. But suddenly, as she gazed out at the space beyond the doorway

in desperate concentration, she realized that the grass and bracken and bramble-sprays there were sparse and burning out quickly, and a few yards away was an open patch of rabbit-nibbled turf, ringed with gorse bushes that had not yet caught alight. Then came the hawthorn hedge with the field of barley on the other side of it. Her shoes were still wet. If she wrapped Mark in the towel, and ran. . . .

A thin squeal came from the corner. The kittens—the whole reason for her being here, and she had forgotten them. She saw that there were only three now. Probably the mother cat had managed to carry one away before the fire barred the entrance.

Clumsy with haste, she scooped them into the basket, slid the handles up her arm again, stooped and lifted Mark's solid little body. It took all her strength. Clenched up with fear, he was a dead weight, but at least he did not struggle. She wrapped the towel closely round him, covering his head, put her cheek against the cool cloth and ran, stumbling, towards that open patch of turf. She felt a sharp burn at the back of her leg, but in a few seconds she was free. To her right was a gap in the thorn bushes. She set Mark down on the powdery bank there and subsided beside him, gulping air. Even here it was hot and smoky, but it was easier to breathe.

She felt dizzy, and when she heard voices wondered if she was imagining things. A man said: "No chance of bringing water up here. We'll have to try to beat it out." And then he said, "My dear life, what—who's this?"

Meg knew this voice: it was real enough. It belonged to Mr. Luscombe, the farmer who owned the barn and the barley field and the hilly pastures. She lifted her head and said, "It's me, Meg Hudson, Mr. Luscombe. I've found Mark—he was in your old barn."

"What, the little feller we've all been looking for? Well, that's a good thing. Come on, let's get him down to your house and set everyone's mind at rest. Bob and Alec can stay here—I'll come back later. We were miles away when we saw this old blaze, and came along as quick as we could. I

was afraid my field of barley would catch fire and burn."

Gently he lifted Mark, who had recovered from his fright enough to begin to cry again. Meg picked up the grimy towel and her basket and they set off towards her home. As they passed a clump of bushes in the meadow she heard a rustling and saw some small animal slip out. It was the mother cat, carrying the fourth kitten. It followed Meg and her mewling basket at a distrustful distance, sprang over the shrunken channel of the stream and walked cautiously up the garden.

Much later that day Meg woke to see her mother standing at the door of her room looking at her.

"What time is it?" she asked drowsily.

"Five o'clock," Mrs. Hudson told her.

"Five o'clock. Then I've slept. . . ."

"For fourteen hours, and a good thing too, after all that scrambling about. How do you feel? How's that burn on your leg?"

"Oh, I'm all right. How's Mark, though, do you know?"

"I've just telephoned Aunt Lavinia. He woke up at lunch time, and seems none the worse."

"Has he talked about the barn at all, or the fire?"

"Yes. He must have gone in there some time after you'd spoken to Amanda last evening and played with the kittens, and just curled up and gone to sleep."

"And I never thought to look in there when I started searching!"

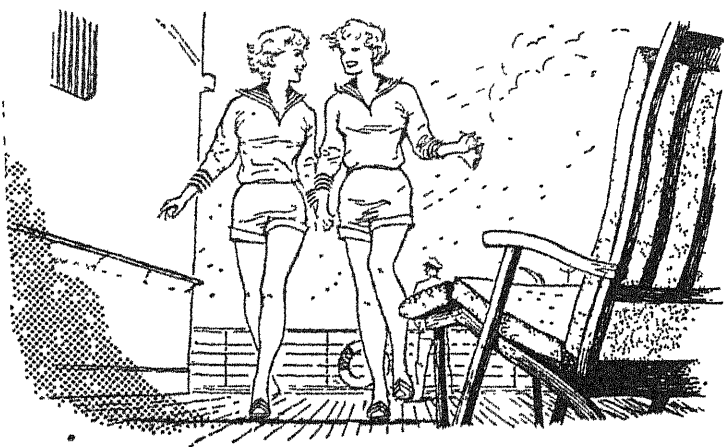
"Well, you found him in time. He's anxious about the kittens, so I said he could be told they were safe here, with their mother."

"He'd better have one to keep. I asked Mr. Luscombe if we could find homes for them all—he said he thinks the mother is one of his farmyard cats."

"Oh, Mark has already laid claim to one, I gather. He's even chosen a name for it."

"What is he going to call it?"

Mrs. Hudson smiled. "Quite logically, from his way of thinking, he has decided to call it *Barnie*."



Thief in the Night

MARJORIE ROWE

"GOSH, Terry! It's half past ten! We ought to have been in bed ages ago," exploded Jill Peters, staring at her wristwatch in consternation and nudging her preoccupied twin.

"Don't panic," murmured Terry calmly. "I keep telling you your watch is an hour fast by ship's time. Why don't you put it right?"

"Thank goodness!" sighed Jill with relief. "I don't feel a bit like going to bed yet." She noticed her twin's far-away look. "What are you staring at?"

"Mrs. Mannings. That woman in the cabin next to ours. I was just thinking how miserable she looks," replied Terry, neatly fielding an ashtray as it took off from the table. The half-empty ballroom of the S.S. *Queen Anne* had been in chaos all evening with tumblers smashing, dancing couples

collapsing in heaps on the deck and sheet music from the bandstand drifting down like autumn leaves. It was the first storm the ship had weathered since leaving Southampton—but they seemed to be through the worst of it now, thank goodness!

Jill nodded. "She's terribly worried. She was telling me her daughter Gay has fallen in love with Dennis Lowry, that tall, dark chap with a moustache. He goes ashore when we dock tomorrow morning and she thinks he's persuaded Gay to elope with him."

"He does look a nasty bit of work," was Terry's comment. "I expect he's after her money."

Jill nodded again, her eyes fixed on the flashily handsome, supercilious man who had been dancing with pretty Gay Mannings all evening and was now standing across the room from them, apparently arguing with her.

No wonder her mother was worried. Gay would inherit a fortune on her twenty-first birthday in a fortnight's time and the general view on board ship was that Lowry was a good-for-nothing who lived by his wits.

As they watched, Gay suddenly thrust her partner aside with an angry gesture, tossed her head and stalked out of the ballroom.

"Oh—look——" gasped Terry, pointing back to Mrs. Mannings who had been sitting alone at a table, busy with her crochet-work, following her daughter with anxious eyes.

When Gay left the room she had risen from her chair as though to follow her when the ship gave a violent lurch, unexpected after the recent calm, and she fell forward to her knees, the pearls from her necklace scattering about her.

"Come on—let's help," said Jill impulsively, grabbing her twin's hand and pulling her across the ballroom. They were the first to reach Mrs. Mannings and after lifting her back into her chair they got down on their knees to retrieve her pearls.

Another couple had seen the accident and sped across to help, followed at a more leisurely pace by a sulky-faced



"Let's help," cried Jill. They got her back into her chair and started to retrieve her scattered pearls.

Lowry who looked as though it were beneath his dignity to hurry.

Soon all except Lowry were scrambling after the elusive beads—though Lowry did so far demean himself as to stoop for one. He gave it a critical glance and handed it to Jill with a bored air.

There was no sign of Gay.

Jill carefully counted the pearls—forty-five of them—into Mrs. Mannings's evening bag and then bent over her with concern. Her face was very pale, her hands trembling.

"Your fall *has* shaken you. Would you like to go to bed?" asked Jill.

Mrs. Mannings managed a weak smile. "Please," she nodded. "Then I can take one of my heart tablets. It's very kind of you both."

Jill dropped the evening bag among the books, magazines and crochet-work in Mrs. Mannings's capacious holdall, picked it up and looked round again for Gay. There was still no sign of her. Perhaps it didn't matter, thought Jill. Dennis Lowry was sure to tell her what had happened as soon as the girl returned to the ballroom.

With Jill and Terry supporting her Mrs. Mannings reached the nearest lift without mishap and was soon sitting on the bunk in her cabin, next to their own on B Deck. The storm had passed now and the ship was riding steadily.

"Let's find your tablets first," suggested Jill, dropping the holdall beside the table and searching for the box. It had fallen to the floor like so many other things on the tossing ship.

When she had taken her tablet, Mrs. Mannings soon looked more like her normal self and by the time the twins had fetched her a hot drink from the galley she had prepared for bed and settled down.

"Can we do anything else?" asked Jill.

"Nothing else, my dears, thank you. I won't lock the door because of Gay. Oh—except the clock! I must take my next tablet at six in the morning."

Jill found the alarm—a very elegant little travelling clock—wound it, set it right by her watch, fixed the alarm for six and put it back on the table. Satisfied they had done all they could, the twins left the cabin. As soon as they had said good night to their parents they were ready for bed themselves. The ship was gliding peacefully now through a quiet sea and with sighs of thankfulness they soon fell asleep.

Many hours later Jill awoke with a start. Whether the shout she'd heard was real or only part of a dream she couldn't be sure. The ship was pitching again; the storm had returned with even greater violence than before. She sat up, closed the porthole and listened.

A latch clicked and then she heard a light switch. Mrs. Mannings must be ill again!

Stopping only to put on her dressing-gown and slippers, Jill knocked gently on the door of the next cabin.

"Are you all right?" she called.

A white and trembling Mrs. Mannings opened the door immediately. She looked badly frightened.

"Someone was in my cabin," she panted. "Just this minute. I woke up and saw a torch flash and I shouted. Then the door closed. Whoever it was had gone by the time I switched on the light."

"There was nobody in the alley-way," said the puzzled Jill. She was inclined to think that Mrs. Mannings had had a bad dream. Her watch said twenty to six—a bit late for burglary. The ship would be astir already. "Is there anything missing?" she asked.

Mrs. Mannings looked round vaguely. The bed table beside her was bare. "My rings!" she cried. "They're gone—everything's gone from the table! Thank heaven my pearls were in the holdall!" Then she stiffened: "But where is the holdall?"

"Oh, dear!" said Jill, leading the trembling Mrs. Mannings back to her bunk again and looking round for the tablets. "Has it really gone?" She found the tablets on the floor but there was no sign of the holdall. "He must have scooped up everything he could reach."



"Someone was in my cabin," she panted, "just this minute!"

"My pearls!" moaned Mrs. Mannings.

"Were they very valuable?" asked Jill.

"Those pearls, my dear, were worth twenty pounds each."

"Each!" gasped Jill. "And there were forty-five of them! Why ever did you leave them in the holdall?"

"I was feeling so ill I never gave them another thought——"

"How awful! If only I'd known they were so valuable I could have put them away for you," fumed Jill.

"Nobody knew—except Gay. I hadn't worn them before last night."

"But an expert would have recognized their value," pointed out Jill. "Three other people handled them besides Terry and me. The young couple called Yates—and Dennis Lowry."

Mrs. Mannings frowned. "I know nothing about the Yates.

But that man Lowry——" Her tone told Jill exactly what she thought of *him*!

Jill nodded. The same thought was in her own mind. She remembered now the appraising glance he had given, during Gay's absence from the ballroom, to the one pearl he had handled. That one glance was enough for an expert.

Besides—it had to be someone from A Deck. Anyone from their own—B—Deck would still have been in the alley-way when Jill opened the door whereas if the thief came from A Deck he could have slipped straight up the nearby stairs and out of sight before Jill appeared. And Lowry *was* on A Deck. It all fitted. And yet—would he risk losing Gay and her fortune for a mere £900 worth of pearls?

But perhaps he thought there was no risk? The ship was docking at six o'clock—quarter of an hour from now. He could hurry ashore—perhaps even taking Gay with him—before there was time to organize a search. He had timed it beautifully.

If he were the thief—and Jill felt sure he was—he must be confronted without delay. But how could anyone do that without evidence? There wasn't a scrap of evidence—only her own intuition—and *in a quarter of an hour it would be too late.*

"I suppose the holdall *is* gone?" she muttered, hoping desperately that they might have made a mistake. "Now the ship's started pitching again it might have slid out of sight."

She looked round the cabin—at the table, the armchair, the books and clothing scattered about the floor since the return of the storm.

Then, suddenly very excited, she dropped on her knees and began to search. Something else was missing! Something that might trap the thief if only she could work out a plan.

"You're wasting your time," said Mrs. Mannings. "I know it's gone."

"It certainly has gone!" said Jill happily. She rose to her feet, her face alight with triumph. "I've had a wonderful idea. I think I may be able to get the pearls back."

She pressed Mrs. Mannings back on to the bunk. "You get back to bed," she urged, "and I'll send Gay to you to report the theft and see to everything. I must go. There isn't a moment to spare. . . ."

• Leaving Mrs. Mannings open-mouthed with astonishment, Jill dashed out of the cabin, enlisted Gay's help for her mother, tore back to her own cabin, woke Terry and explained her plan.

Only then, as they both threw on their clothes in frantic haste, did the dreadful truth dawn on her.

Her wonderful idea wouldn't work!

She flopped on her bunk in despair. "Terry—it's no good," she wailed. "It's five to six. Lowry will have packed and left his cabin— Why didn't I think of it? We shall never prove it now!"

Terry's glance flickered to her bedside clock and she eyed her twin patiently. "Did you put your watch right last night when I told you to?"

Jill gaped at her. "No I didn't, as a matter of fact. But what's that got to do with it?"

"Everything," said Terry pityingly. "You're hopelessly absent-minded. Do it now."

Jill obediently adjusted her watch.

"Well?" asked her twin caustically.

Jill clapped her hand over her mouth as she saw the point.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Then it's really four minutes to *five*—not six. I see what you mean——"

Terry grinned broadly. "Action stations! Four minutes should be enough. The only snag is—his door will be locked."

"I'd thought of that," whispered Jill, leading the way out of the cabin. They tiptoed up the stairs to A Deck where they stationed themselves in the alley-way.

Jill's watch ticked on. It said almost five o'clock when she knocked on the door of cabin No. 43.

"Your tea, sir," she called.

"Thank you," came the reply. There was movement in the cabin and footsteps approached the door.

MARJORIE ROWE

Just as the key turned in the lock and the door began to open there came, from inside the cabin, the familiar burr-burr of Mrs. Mannings's alarm clock—a sound which had wakened the twins each morning at six since the voyage had begun—a sound neither of them could possibly mistake.



For a moment all three stared and listened.

With the evidence against Lowry literally ringing in their ears, Jill and Terry charged the opening door and forced their way into the cabin. Under the washstand stood Mrs. Mannings's holdall, the missing alarm clock still burr-burring

inside it where the rolling of the ship had tossed it during the night.

For a moment all three stared and listened.

Lowry, taken by surprise in the midst of his packing, had scarcely time to recover from the shock of their attack before Jill's lightning inspection had shown her Mrs. Mannings's evening bag lying on his bunk. She grabbed it, satisfied herself that the pearls were still there, snatched up the holdall and retreated safely to the door. The sight of the man's startled and guilty face was something the twins would chuckle about for a long time to come.

"Absent-mindedness comes in useful sometimes," gloated Jill as they sped down the alley-way to the stairs. "If my watch hadn't still been fast, the clock wouldn't have been fast either, and Lowry and the pearls would have been packed up and out of the cabin long before the alarm went off."

"True," conceded Terry handsomely. "And by the time it *did* go off nobody that mattered would have heard it and there'd *never* have been any proof."

They took the last few steps at a jump and raced to Mrs. Mannings's cabin to hand over the pearls. The unpleasant business of notifying the Purser of the identity of the thief would not be their concern, thank goodness!

"I still think Lowry was crazy to risk stealing the pearls when he expected to marry Gay," puzzled Jill later that morning when Mrs. Mannings was congratulating the twins on their quick-wittedness.

"Oh—but he *didn't* expect to marry her," explained Mrs. Mannings. "She had a quarrel with him last night——"

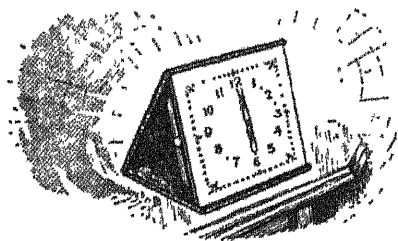
"So she did," recalled Jill. "We saw her leave the ballroom. She looked angry. . . ."

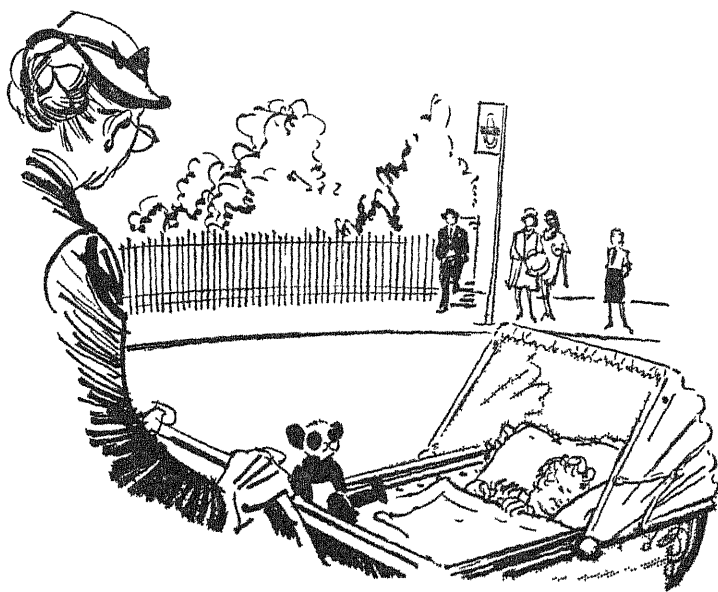
Mrs. Mannings nodded. "She broke off her engagement. So you see he must have decided to take the pearls as a consolation prize—or from spite."

She gave a satisfied chuckle. "But he shouldn't have been

MARJORIE ROWE

so impatient. Gay tells me she'd intended to forgive him and join him later—and if you hadn't proved him a thief she *would* have done so. But not now." She shook her head contentedly. "I feel very happy about it. This has taught her a lesson—with no harm done— thanks to you."





The Child Stealers

ELISABETH KYLE

IT WAS Saturday afternoon, so Jill was free to linger outside the big Hotel Splendide on her way to the park. You often saw interesting people going in and out of the hotel.

Jill lingered beside the bus stop just opposite. Two women with shopping baskets were there already. Also a little elderly man in a brown suit. They all stared across the road, watching a pram emerging from the hotel, pushed by a grey-haired woman wearing a dark straight coat like a uniform.

One of the women nudged the other. Jill heard her say: "Look, there's the Million Dollar Baby!"

"What's that?" The other woman turned her head to watch

the luxurious pram with its embroidered cover, and the pink face of the baby lying above it.

"I read it in the papers. People called Mather. American millionaires they are. Brought their baby over here because they're scared of its being kidnapped."

"Kidnapped?"

The first woman nodded vigorously. "They do that kind of thing in America. Britain's safer, it seems. The paper said they've a detective hired to watch that baby day and night. They call him the Million Dollar Baby because that's what he got for a christening present."

A baby worth a million dollars already! Jill watched the pram being pushed across the road, past the newspaper stand by the gate of the park, where a thin tall man stood reading his paper there on the pavement. Just then a bus lumbered up. The two women got in. Jill waited till it had passed, then crossed the road in the wake of the pram. And the little man in the brown suit, who looked as if he had been waiting for the bus, followed them unobtrusively instead.

Jill wanted to have a closer view of a baby as valuable as all that. As she went through the park gates, the tall man folded his newspaper, tucked it under his arm, and drifted in as well. Meanwhile Jill was walking as slowly as possible past the nurse with the pram. She thought the baby looked like any other baby, seen close. But she liked the soft Panda doll thrown down in a corner of the pram. It seemed too good to waste on a baby as small as that.

The nurse sat down on a seat. Jill didn't quite like to sit on the same one, she had stared rather hard at the pram already. So she sat down on another, nearby. Presently the tall thin man with the newspaper under his arm dropped down on the seat beside her.

"You seem very interested in that baby," he said.

"It's a Million Dollar Baby, that's why." Jill felt proud to hand on the information. "And," she added impressively, "there's a detective watching him day and night!"

"Yes I know." The man smiled rather oddly. He had his

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"Are you the detective?" she asked breathlessly.

eyes on the baby too. Could it be—— Was it possible——?

"Are you the detective?" she asked breathlessly.

He nodded. "But keep it under your hat."

"But what would anybody want to steal a baby for?" Jill wanted to know.

"For the ransom of course. Folks like the Mathers would pay big money to get their child back. See that man over there?" He glanced towards the little man in the brown suit who stood apparently harmlessly, some distance away, feeding the pigeons from crumbs he brought out of his pocket.

"Yes. What about him?"

"He's a fellow called Tough Tony. He'd try anything though he doesn't look it. Maybe he isn't up to mischief, maybe he is. I'm keeping an eye on him anyway."

Jill fetched a deep, excited breath. Tough Tony! It was all like a movie, not like an ordinary afternoon in the park at all.

Rather late, she remembered how her mother had always told her not to talk to strangers. So she got up from the seat and began to walk away.

She heard the man burst out laughing behind her. It made her cheeks hot. What on earth had he got to laugh about? The sun was burning down and she felt hot all over anyway. She passed the pram again. The nurse had been reading a book. Now the book had dropped on her lap and her head was nodding. She looked as if she would go fast asleep any minute, in the warmth of the sun.

Jill crossed the park and left it by the opposite gate, the one near the shops. She wanted to spend her Saturday money. A young woman came slowly towards her, pushing a pram. She looked rather flashy and wore a head-square of yellow silk knotted under her chin. The pram was shabby and battered, as unlike the other one as possible. There wasn't even a baby in it. It was empty. No doubt the young woman was going to collect her baby from somewhere.

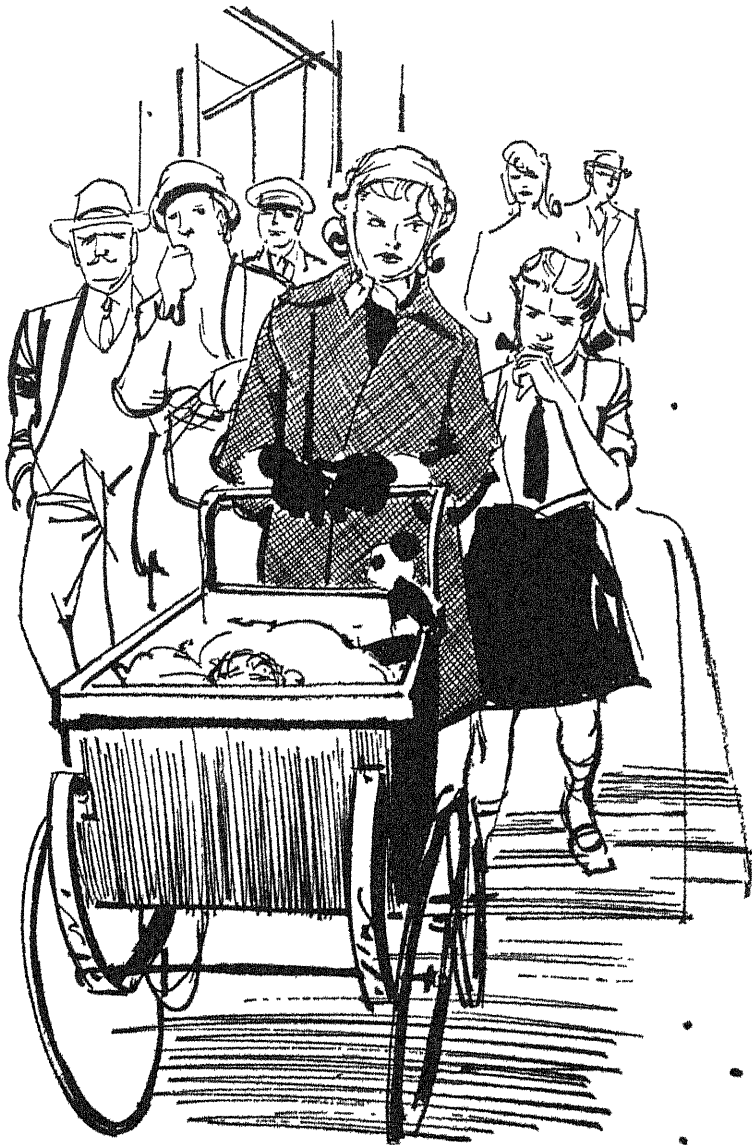
Jill gave it only a passing glance before she left the park and entered the shopping street. The pavement was crammed with Saturday shoppers; the shops themselves were so busy, it took her quite a long while before she was served. At last she had all she wanted. She began to saunter past the windows, looking in at the things she might have bought if she hadn't bought something else. . . .

People pressed against her suddenly. They were making way for a pram that pushed past her so close, she could see right inside. It was the pram belonging to the flashy young woman with the yellow head-square. But there was a baby inside it now. Just the same size and pinkness as the other baby. The same single fine curl of hair above the large, bald brow.

Of course many babies look very much alike at that age. Besides, the pram was different, and the shabby old quilt was different, and—but was the silky Panda different too?

The crowd was carrying Jill and the pram and the woman all in the same direction, close to each other. Jill peered down

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Jill stared and stared at the child in the pram.

at the Panda. She was just being silly of course. Though she was sure there hadn't been one in the pram when she passed it before. . . .

Just then the woman looked sideways and saw her staring down at the baby. Jill looked up suddenly and caught a look of anger and fear on the other's face. The next moment the woman had given a sudden sharp twist to the handles of the pram, had driven it right across the pavement and disappeared with it down a narrow opening between two shops.

Jill didn't stop to think. Instinctively she tried to follow. But a wedge of passers-by got in her way, and held her up momentarily. By the time she had reached the passage mouth and run down it, the passage itself was empty.

The other end opened on to a busy street. Jill hesitated, looking right and then left. No sign of the pram. Yet surely there hadn't been time for the woman to have reached either end of the street! There was only one other thing the woman could have done. She could have wheeled the pram into the big shop opposite.

It had a very wide entrance, through which people were pouring in and out. Jill ran across the street towards it. She spoke to a bunch of shoppers lingering in the doorway.

"Please, did somebody push a pram in here just now?"

The women just stared, then shook their heads. They had been paying no attention. A large commissioner in a blue uniform had overheard her. "No prams allowed in here," he said firmly.

Where else could it possibly have gone? As she stood there, half of her mind puzzled over its sudden disappearance, and the other half over her own action in following it at all. What on earth had made her do that? The people standing around would think her cracked if they knew!

But there *had* been that queer, frightened look on the woman's face. And her sudden dive into the passage. Quite apart from the baby's curl. Most babies have curls. And the Panda? Some babies have Pandas too. . . .

She felt a touch on her arm. It was one of the boys from the

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shop. He was clutching a cardboard box for delivery. "She went through the staff door," he said. "Her and the pram. I saw them all right."

"Through the——"

- "Here." The swing door was just beside them. He held it open and they both went through. He had red hair and freckles. He asked, "What's up?"

The corridor beyond was empty. Jill began running down it and the boy followed. "I think she's stolen the Million Dollar Baby!" she gasped over her shoulder.

"Whizz!" said the boy, running harder than ever until he drew level with her. Just there, another passage opened off to the left. Somebody was pounding down it. To Jill's amazement she saw it was the little man in the brown suit. But now he had sticking plaster on one cheek and a roughly bandaged hand.



"This way," the boy said, opening the nearest door.

So she knew, with a great bump of excitement, that she was right. "That's Tough Tony! He's after the baby too——"

The boy was quick. "I'll stop him while you go after the pram. She may have pushed it into the yard—over there——"

The little man had reached them now. "Seen a woman with a pram?" he shouted.

"This way!" the boy said, opening the nearest door as if it led into the street. The man couldn't stop himself. He ran right on, slap into the little room beyond. In a flash the boy had slammed the door upon him and locked it on the outside.

Jill had reached the end of the corridor and was in the courtyard beyond. Here the big store vans were parked. The pram stood there, but it was empty again. No sign of the woman, even. She was just in time to see a taxi vanishing out of the yard. Could the woman have got into it? Looking hopelessly around she noticed that the engine of one of the vans was running. And the man at the wheel was the detective who had spoken to her in the park. Amazed, she rushed over to him:

"Quick!" she gasped, "the woman and the baby—they must have driven off in that taxi! Oh, follow them, quick!"

The tall thin man turned his head, giving her a sharp look. "What do you know about it? Better come with me then. Jump in!"

He thrust the door of the van open and pulled her roughly on to the seat beside him, all in a moment. Just as they drove off, the boy, still clutching his cardboard box, appeared open-mouthed, in the passage entry. Jill gave him a wave of gratitude for dealing so promptly with Tough Tony. She hoped he would know what it meant.

The thin man at the wheel hadn't noticed. He seemed to have lost the taxi and be cruising around, looking for it. Now he was driving through mean little streets, in a part of the town Jill had never been in before. And suddenly she heard a thin, angry wail coming from just behind her—from the back of the van, in fact.

She peered round. There, on a wooden seat, lay the baby!

"Yeah," said the man at the wheel, "we got him all right."

The van stopped suddenly. "Get out!" he ordered. He seized her wrists, dragged her on to the pavement and through a narrow doorway. The flashy young woman, who must have been awaiting the van's arrival, darted out of the house that moment, scooped the baby out of the van and ran back into the house again. The man shut the front door and locked it.

"Who you got there, Tony?" The young woman stared at Jill.

"She got wise to it. Been following the baby, and knew me again. So she'd better stay here till we make our getaway."

He grinned into Jill's astonished face. "I told you a true fairy tale in the park, didn't I? Only the names got kind-a mixed. The fella in the brown suit was the 'tec. I knocked him out, after you'd left, while Louie here, grabbed the kid."

"Then you're——" She stared at him unbelievably.

"Yeah. I'm Tough Tony. Now I got to park the van somewhere. Can't have it standin' here givin' the show away. Louie, you shove the girl in there with the baby. I'll be right back for you presently—you and the kid."

Louie pushed Jill into a tiny room with a small, high-up barred window. She laid the baby down on a ramshackle couch in one corner, then tossed the Panda contemptuously down beside him. "There, that'll keep you quiet!"

She turned to Jill. "You can't get through that window, see? And you can shout as hard as you like, nobody'll hear you. Houses on each side are empty, and too much racket going on in the street. Next time—mind your own business!"

A quick step backward, and she was gone. Jill heard the door being locked behind her. Her throat felt quite dry, so that she couldn't scream anyway. She was icy cold, too. The baby began to whimper. Presently she felt able to take a few stiff steps towards the couch. The baby stopped whimpering, staring at her instead. . . .

"We're both in this together," Jill murmured, looking down on the one golden curl.

The street door banged. That was the man, Tony, going out to get rid of the van before anybody recognized it. She could hear the woman moving about softly in the room beyond. Opening cupboards. Laying a table for a meal. Jill raised her clenched hands, meaning to beat on the door. Then she dropped them again. What was the use? The woman, Louie, looked just as hard as the man.

And the man would be back quite soon; would take a hasty meal, and then they would open the door, whisk away the Million Dollar Baby, and lock up Jill again. For the moment she had forgotten to worry about herself. She was thinking about the baby.

And there was so little time, before Tony came back!

As quietly as she could, she dragged the couch until it stood under the window. She could hear the traffic rumbling past below. Then she stood on the couch and looked through the bars. The street seemed far away. The heads of the people passing by were far below her. Nobody looked up. She could see it was useless to shout, for nobody but Louie would hear her on account of the roar of traffic outside.

And what might not Louie do to her if she *did* shout?

The baby was crying again. She climbed down hastily and began to comfort it. "Here ducky, take your lovely Panda!" But he was sick of his Panda. He hurled it on to the floor.

She stooped to pick it up, then stiffened suddenly, with the soft thing in her hand. It was only a chance—a very faint chance—that if the Panda went between the bars, and if somebody intelligent took it to the police as lost property, they might trace it back to this house. Because the baby's loss would be notified, surely, by now. And the police *might* have been told about the Panda too. . . .

She climbed up again, and squeezed the furry little body through the bars. It fell from her fingers at last. She couldn't hear the sound of its fall of course, and could have no idea whether any of the hurrying throng stopped to pick it up. Besides, she felt suddenly very, very tired. She dropped down on the couch beside the baby and fell asleep. . . .

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She soon woke up but it was already dark. She could hear Tony's voice as well as Louie's, in the next room. They were moving about as if preparing to go. Jill raised her head sharply. They weren't going to leave her here in an empty house if she could help it! She measured the distance to the door. If she stood just behind, and darted through the very minute Louie came in for the baby, perhaps she might have a chance of dashing out of the house!

She moved to the side of the door. Just in time. Louie was unlocking it the next minute. It swung open and Jill cannoned into her on the way out. Louie had been making for the couch and was taken by surprise. "Catch the girl, Tony!" she shouted, scooping the baby up in her arms.

But Tony was bending to lift two suitcases as Jill dashed past him. In a flash she was on the landing, her hand groping for the banister. The unknown stairs were terrifying in the



She climbed up again and squeezed it through the bars."

darkness but she forced herself to hurry downwards, and in a moment Tony was clump-clump-clumping after her. It was a relief when Louie above touched a switch and flooded the staircase with light.

But Tony's steps at once became a rapid tattoo, and Jill



She flung herself downstairs in mad terror to be out.

flung herself forward three steps at a time in a mad terror to be out. Now she had reached the front door; was tugging it open; felt the wonderful night air on her face. An empty car stood at the kerb, its engine running, ready to take the baby away. She had just time to notice it when Tony's arms grasped her again.

"No you don't!"

She gasped and struggled, and felt herself being lifted back into the house again. She didn't even see the police car gliding up suddenly behind the other. But Tough Tony saw the uniformed men pouring out of it. He tried to slam the door shut but a large police boot jammed it open.

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Jill felt herself suddenly freed. "Up the stairs!" she cried. "The baby's upstairs!" and several constables rushed past her.

A few minutes later they were all together in the room from which she had so recently fled. It was crowded. There were Tony and Louie standing sullenly with a policeman on either side of them. And then out of nowhere it seemed came the little man in the brown suit. He had brought the baby out from the other room and now stood with him in his arms, looking slightly embarrassed. Jill still felt dazed. She wondered vaguely how on earth he had got there.

"We traced the van to within fifty yards of this house," he said, as if in answer to her unspoken thought. "Lucky for you, lass, that our friend here"—and he nudged the red-haired boy with freckles who also stood there smirking with self-satisfaction—"took the number of the van you were in. You're good at taking numbers, aren't you!"

"Well," said the boy, "it was one of our vans—but you see it wasn't one of our drivers. So I thought——"

"Quite!" said the man in the brown suit. "You're pretty good at locking up the wrong man, too, aren't you?"

"Gosh!" said the boy looking admiringly at the little man, "fancy him being a detective! You must admit that I got a policeman to let you out—when you made all that row. . . ."

Jill found herself smiling at the pair of them. The boy went on: "*She* said you were Tough Tony, and how was I to know?"

"All right, boy, you did your best and it was a good best. But it was this little lady who brought us right inside this house."

"You saw the panda?" said Jill.

"Yes, I spotted the panda. I saw it fall. And it didn't take me long to see what it was. You're a clever girl," he added.

Jill blushed very happily, and the red-haired boy grinned.

Later in the taxi home, she said: "Do you think I could ask to keep that panda? Not to play with," she added hastily, "but I would like it as a memento."

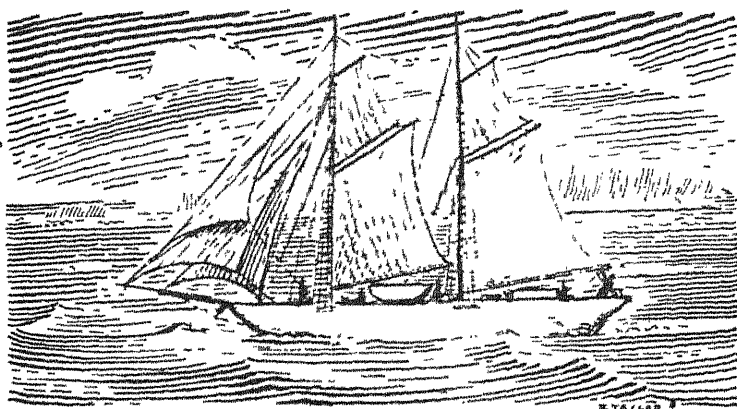
"Why not?" said the little man. "Course you can. Brrr we

ELISABETH KYRI

can do better than that," he said. "Do you know there's a reward for information leading to the recovery of that baby? You and Ginger here supplied the information. I guess you'll get it between you. Believe me, it will go to a load of pandas!"

"Whizz!" The red-haired boy made a sound between his teeth. Then he added hopefully: "Will it go to a motor-bike?"





The Lost Chance

MARGARET RUTHIN

I THINK everyone, at some time or other, has a moment when they are so happy they are afraid it must be a dream, and waking will spoil everything. I was like that as I sat in the stern of our little schooner, the tiller under my right arm and the wharves of Auckland harbour being left behind as our old auxiliary engine chug-chug-chugged away. My eighteen-year-old brother Steve was hoisting the mainsail with the help of our two Island boys, Jo and Pip. Steve kept looking back in my direction, then ahead as if to make sure we did not run down a buoy, or hit something else. He has the idea that girls of sixteen are not really dependable as sailors.

Ahead of us lay a 700-mile sea trip across the Pacific to Sunday Island, but that was not the reason for my feeling of heavenly bliss as Rangitoto, the grim volcanic pile which guards Auckland harbour drew nearer. For years we have

lived on Sunday Island. Father, Steve, me---my name is Patricia Sheelagh Jenkyn, Pat for short. Pip and Jo are Island boys who act as crew on the *Kingfish*, and help us with the orange crop.

The only worthwhile thing on the island is the orange crop. Each year we take piles of luscious fruit to Auckland, or Brisbane, and we have been saving money as hard as anybody could. We live on fish and scraggy goats . . . the goats are wild, and if you have ever tried chewing old boots you will know what wild goat tastes like.

Our ambition is to save enough money to buy a house and a little land either in New Zealand or Australia, get a much better engine for the *Kingfish*, and begin to live a real life. With a fast boat we could still bring the oranges from Sunday, and at the same time get away from the awful solitude of a Pacific island.

Sunday Island is a wonderful place for peace. No buses, cars, no crowds, no smoke . . . and no one fresh to talk to; no shop where you can buy things; no hairdresser when you feel like a perm.

Now, as we headed back into the Pacific a wonderful chance lay ahead of us. For some reason there was a great shortage of oranges. Prices were up, and Steve had a contract in his pocket from an Auckland dealer. A contract to deliver a piled-high boatload of Sunday Island oranges at a price which brought visions of new dresses, shoes, nylon stockings, a hair-do, perhaps even a nice bungalow where Father could rest and get back his lost health.

He usually skips the *Kingfish* but for the first time for years he had entrusted the task to Steve, with me as Mate. Father needed medical attention, but nothing we could say would persuade him to leave the island until we had enough money to set up home on the mainland.

“So you can see why I sat there, in the quiet after Steve had shut off the engine, and listened to the song of the wind in the rigging, and was happy . . . happy as the happiest queen ever” was.

When we left Motu Hinau behind, the last New Zealand island, there was little between us and Sunday but the vastness of the Pacific. If the wind kept steady we would be home in six days. There would be a day or so loading oranges, then a hectic return trip . . . with father and all our little treasures aboard. The very thought of it kept sending little shivers of ecstasy down my spine.

There were shivers of a different kind two days later, for to the south we sighted a speck where no speck should be, and when Steve climbed the mast—one day he will come such a cropper, despite my warnings—he yelled down for me to alter course. The speck was a boat of some kind.

When we got to it I had an awful feeling of impending disaster. The boat was a native outrigger canoe. It had come from one of the very tiny atolls where a handful of natives live by fishing and trading a little copra now and then from the coco-nut palms which seem to hold the atolls together. Two exhausted-looking islanders stared at us, and between them lay an older man, obviously suffering from injuries of some kind.

Jo and Pip kept the outrigger alongside after our mainsail had been dropped and Steve clambered down on to the outrigger. When he came back to where I sat at the tiller, his face was serious.

"The old man has been mauled by a shark. They were trying to get him to a doctor. Hoped they might spot one of the trading schooners."

"Is he . . . very badly injured?" I asked. My heart was fluttering and I felt as if I had been running hard.

"He might recover . . . if he could be got to a doctor," Steve said soberly, and ran a hand through his thick mop of wavy hair. Then he added: "As far as I know none of the trading ships are due out here yet."

I gulped. It is queer how in times like this a lump comes in the throat. I had to swallow twice before I could say:

"Well . . . Stevie . . . couldn't we . . ." and then I stopped. I suddenly remembered that contract Steve had in his pocket.



"Is he . . . very badly injured?" I asked.

We had promised to deliver as full a cargo of Sunday Island oranges as possible, within twenty-one days of leaving Auckland harbour. If we did that, we would get top price for the fruit, and it would mean a new life for all of us. We could leave Sunday Island. That contract was like a golden key to open a door we had wanted to open, but hardly thought we ever could.

"With the wind as it is, Pat, we'll be three days getting back to land," Steve said. "We're going to lose a full week. We couldn't do it." He placed a hand over the pocket which held

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the contract, chewed for a moment on his lower lip, then said miserably: "It's the chance of a lifetime for Father."

I couldn't say anything. There are times when words are useless. I just looked at my brother and waited. I was seeing him through a blur, though whether he knew there were tears in my eyes I do not know. Perhaps he did for suddenly he turned and yelled to Jo and Pip to get the injured man aboard.

I knew we just had to do something for the old man, but when I thought of the chance we were throwing away, the chance of getting away from Sunday Island, of getting a house on the mainland, and medical attention for my father . . . I just sat and chewed my lip, and tried to blink the tears away. I knew the happiness which had looked so near was going to be only a dream. Nobody could expect to be so lucky.

Sixty hours after turning back we got the old Islander ashore and into an ambulance. He thrust out a thin brown hand, laid it on my arm, and looked at me. His eyes said "Thank you" far more sincerely than words could ever have done.

The ambulance was hardly off the wharf when we were chugging outward again. We were going to try the impossible: Sunday Island and back in fourteen days. If a miracle happened we might do it.

Instead of a miracle we ran into a storm—a storm we would certainly have missed if we had not helped the injured Islander. The Pacific can be smooth as glass, with long oily-looking waves, and it can be a fantastic turmoil of broken water which boils and breaks all about you.

We lost our main mast, and had to cut the mainsail free. Steve and the two boys, Jo and Pip, were magnificent. They fought like heroes, while I sat down in the stern and pumped. I pumped until my arms lost all feeling. I went on pumping when my whole body was just one big ache.

I could not give up. After all, if I hadn't forced Steve to take the injured man aboard, and turn back for Auckland,

this disaster would never have happened. Steve never blamed me by so much as a single reproachful look, but I knew that deep down he must be feeling that we had lost the finest chance we were ever likely to have.

I must have gone to sleep from sheer exhaustion, for when I awoke I was in my bunk, and Steve was holding a cup of steaming coffee inches only from my nose. The *Kingfish* was still lurching in a choppy sea but the howling of the wind had gone. The cabin smelt of wet clothes and spoiled stores as I took the coffee and chanced a quick glance at Steve.

Brothers can be awful at times. They tease you, they pretend you are little better than useless, but if other brothers are like Stevie, deep down they are pretty grand. He must have known how rotten I was feeling, for he shoved his right hand into my tangled hair, winked, grinned, and said:

"Well, who wants to go and live on the mainland, anyway? There'll be other chances, you'll see. At least we gave the old fellow a chance to live . . . and he owes that to you."

I gulped coffee, to choke down a funny little sob, and at that moment there was a yell from Jo. When I got on deck all three were looking across the tossing water at another vessel, a battered hulk rather bigger than the *Kingfish*.

"Flying a flag of distress," Steve grunted, staring at her through the one pair of glasses we had. "Though what we can do . . . I dunno. What do you say, Pat?"

- I shrugged and spread my hands.

"We can't possibly fulfil the contract for oranges," I said. "They can hardly be worse off than us but I suppose we ought to go over and see what we can do!"

"Some day, you'll get a medal," Steve grunted, then jerked a thumb towards the tiller and went for'ard to see if the makeshift mast he had shipped would stand a little more sail.

We limped across to the other vessel. She looked like a pearling lugger, and only the broken stump of a mainmast showed above her deckhousing. It was from that the signal of distress was flying.

Steve yelled himself hoarse as we crept slowly nearer, but

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no one appeared on deck. Then I had what I thought was a brilliant idea.

"Steve," I almost screeched in my excitement. "If there's no one aboard and we could get her into port . . . what about salvage? If she had a valuable cargo we'd get half its value, half the value of the ship, and so . . ."

"Stop counting chickens, Patty." Steve always said "Patty"



"Flying a flag of distress," Steven grunted.

when he was being a little bit superior. "She's got plenty of water in her, and don't forget a crew doesn't leave a ship unless there's every likelihood of it sinking pretty soon. To my way of thinking she looks about as seaworthy as an old pig!"

That damped my enthusiasm quite a lot, but as we drew nearer it seemed fairly certain there was no one aboard. Even when we were little more than fifty yards away there was still

no reply to the hoarse and hearty bellowing of Jo and Pip.

"I'm not going any closer," Steve decided. "With this swell on the water we could easily bump her, and if we did we'd come off worst. She . . ."

"Look, look," I interrupted, and my heart was thumping madly. "Did you see a movement on deck? That heap of canvas and rigging. It moved. There's somebody trapped. They must have been knocked down when the mast and riggings fell, and now they're trying to get out."

Steve yelled again. The canvas moved a little. There was no doubt about it that someone was imprisoned there, and fighting desperately to get free. A minute went by, two minutes; the struggling stopped, and I looked anxiously at Steve. Our dinghy had been stove-in during the storm, and was just a mess of broken planking. To get aboard this abandoned ship meant taking the *Kingfish* very close, or someone swimming across.

That was the solution: "I'll swim over," I volunteered. "I could easily do it . . ."

"You're not being as observant as usual, Patty," Steve grunted, and jerked a thumb towards our stern. I looked and felt sick for a moment. Old-timers in the South Seas say that when a ship is in distress you can be sure there will be one or two sharks hanging about. How they know the crew are in trouble nobody explains. Anyway, there *was* a shark just beyond our stern. His big dorsal fin cleaving the water, a grim warning to anyone fool enough to get within his reach.

"It's too big a risk to take her closer," Steve said, frowning. "If we hit her . . . well, you know enough about boats to realize what could happen."

I did know. I have been sailing with Father and Steve for seven years, and I have seen the Pacific in all its moods, beautiful, ugly, calm, vengeful. The *Kingfish* was our bread and butter. Without it we could not carry oranges from Sunday Island to Auckland; yet when I saw that canvas on the deck of the derelict begin heaving again I knew we could not turn away.

THE LOST CHANCE

"Steve," I said humbly, "I know I shouldn't say this . . . but we can't leave him to die. We've got to try something. He must be injured or he would have got free long before this. Couldn't we . . . ?" I stopped then. It suddenly struck me that I must have said something like this days earlier, when we had taken aboard the old Islander who had been shark-mauled. That good turn had cost us dearly.

I chewed on my lower lip and tried not to see the pathetic wriggles and vague movements under the heap of cordage and canvas. The business part of my mind said sternly: "Pat Jenkyn there are times when you have got to think about yourself first. Look after Number One . . . that means your father, your brother and yourself. You have already cost them plenty . . . lost them a wonderful chance of making money."

The trouble with me is that my conscience has a strong voice, and it just will not be gagged. It didn't shout. It just kept saying quietly . . . way back of my mind: "How would you like to be left to die? What will you think of yourself later on when you remember that someone was trapped . . . and you would not help? Suppose it had been your own father?"

I turned to Steve, opened my mouth, but he knew what was coming and nodded:

"All right, Pat . . . don't say it. I'll take her nearer, then I'm going to hand you the tiller. Don't make a mistake. If I can, and I think I can, I'll board her by jumping. Take us as near as you can, then come round in a circle to take us off. Jo . . . Pip . . . one get a gun in case I miss my jump. The shark won't lose any time. The other, it had better be Jo I think, have a line swinging to help me aboard if I go in the drink."

If I could have handed that tiller to anyone just then I would have done it. I wanted to close my eyes and stuff fingers into my ears. I just had a feeling that we were walking open-eyed into disaster. We ought not to have risked going close. It was jeopardising four lives for the sake of one.

I opened my mouth to tell Steve not to take the risk, then I looked across the few yards of water which separated the two vessels again. The heap of sail canvas and tangled rigging was heaving again. You just can't turn away and leave somebody to die. He was trapped without a hope of rescue if we did not go in to help.

"All set, Pat?"

I nodded, and wished we had been able to get our auxiliary motor working. We were depending on a jury mast and a rag of canvas. The poor old *Kingfish* was sluggish on the tiller. I did my best, and we were edging alongside. Steve was on our low rail, supported on one side by Jo and Pip on the other.

He was tensed for the leap when as if some evil spirit from deep down in the ocean had decided to have a joke, a wave larger than usual came and lifted us. I saw Steve jump even as I felt the *Kingfish* begin to rise. There was nothing I could do. We were heaved up, so that I could look right across the cluttered decks of the larger vessel. Then we struck her broadside on.

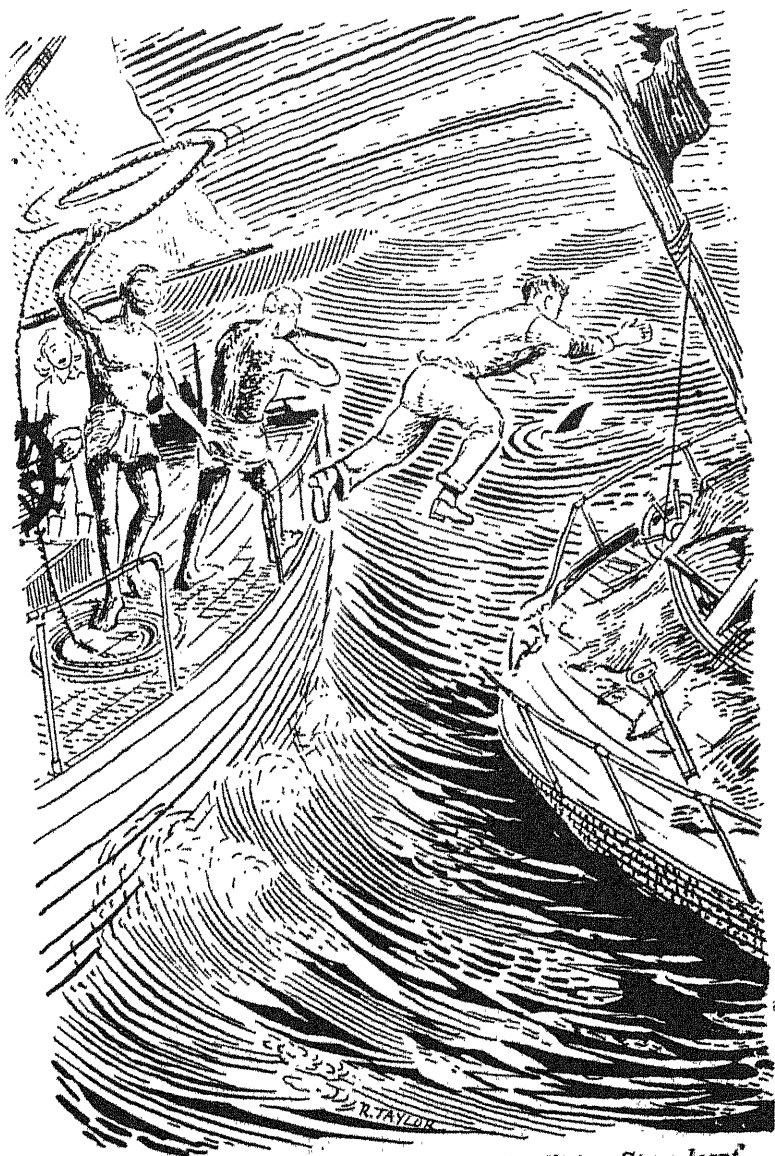
Crash! The sound seemed to go right through me. I was almost thrown over the side. But even in the moment of impact I heard the crack and splintering of our timbers. The ship's ribs must have been smashed like sticks of celery. Planking was stove in.

We seemed to bounce back, and then the dreadful rush and gurgle of water told its own story. The *Kingfish* had sailed its last voyage and was on her way to Davy Jones's Locker.

In five minutes it was all over. We jumped for the derelict, from the frying pan into the fire, and were lucky to cheat the prowling shark. I did not look at the poor old *Kingfish* which was slowly sinking, but went quickly over to the heap of cordage and sailcloth. It was still heaving a little, and when I got Jo to help me we released the poor prisoner. It was a dog!

I looked at Steve, then burst out crying. I do not cry often,

THE LOST CHANCE



When we were almost at the point of collision Steve leapt.



With mixed feelings I knelt and picked up the youngster—it had cost the life of a good ship.

but when I thought that we had risked our lives and lost our own ship for an underfed mongrel dog I sat down and howled.

Steve did not try to comfort me. He came over, told me that if I wanted to live I must lend a hand bailing. If I live to be a thousand years old I never want to bail water again. We just bailed and bailed, and the weather was kind to us. The seas abated, the wind dropped to a breeze which enabled us to rig a jury mast and a rag of sail.

It was five days before we limped along to Sunday Island. There is only one place where a vessel can get close to shore. We went in and beached our "prize."

Father was waiting for us, and as I stumbled up the silvery white sand he just held out his arms and folded me to him. That seemed to make it all the worse for me. I just felt as if I

THE LOST CHANCE

had been responsible for taking away from him everything he had worked for. I did begin to say I was sorry, but he merely laid a gentle hand across my lips and led me over to the home-made house we had planned to leave.

We had a meal and then slept. Even Jo and Pip, born to the rough and tumble of sailing the Pacific were worn out. They told me that I slept the clock round two and a half times. Thirty hours sleep, and I still felt tired when Father came in with a cup of coffee and insisted that I drink it quickly.

"We want our Fairy Godmother to come and look at something," he said, and in a vague way I realized he was different. He looked happy, and suddenly I felt a queer excitement. I drank my coffee in three most un-ladylike gulps and was in the other room the moment I was presentable.

Steve was there, and with Father was examining a queer looking thing, a lump of pale yellow stuff about twice the size of a football.

"I found this in the hold of the ship you salvaged," Father said. "I was rummaging around to see what needed doing to make her seaworthy. This stuff must have come in through the hole in her stern . . ."

"What is it?" I knew there must be something pretty strange about it, for Steve had a faraway, I'm-on-top-of-the-world look in his eyes.

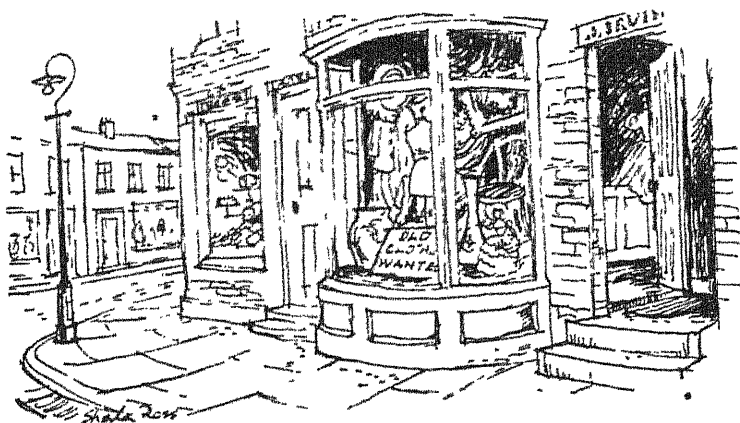
"This, Patricia Sheelagh Jenkyn," Father said, giving me a powerful hug, "is ambergris. It is the stuff which I believe gives whales tummy-ache, and is used by perfume makers as the base of the most expensive scents. It will bring pounds and pounds for every ounce of the stuff . . . and it is pretty heavy."

Which is why, after we had patched up the hulk we had come to Sunday Island in, we were able to sail back to Auckland and with the money we got buy a new *Kingfish II*. That was a year ago. Now, living in a nice little bungalow on the outskirts of Auckland we make fast runs to Sunday

MARGARET RUTHIN

Island for oranges, and I still have time to go to dances, wear nice dresses, nylon stockings and put a touch of scent behind my ears on special occasions. I often think about the old Islander who was mauled by a shark. If we had not brought him in to have medical attention . . . but then, of course, we did bring him in, and I suppose that is one reason why the Jenkyn family is now on its feet again.





Theodora's First Case

LORNA WOOD

"**W**E'VE got to make some more money," said Theo determinedly, "and I can't think of any other way, can you? We really haven't got a bean—not since we put all our money into Premium Bonds."

"And we just *can't* draw that out," agreed her sister Di earnestly. "We might win something any time."

"Well, let's consider it settled then. We'll take some more old clothes to sell and you must play 'The Rustle of Spring' for Mrs. Irving and perhaps we'll get enough for our Christmas presents."

Di giggled.

"I do hate playing on that awful piano. There are so many notes that *won't* play and it makes it sound toothless somehow."

"Nevertheless *she* enjoys it, and I don't think she notices the gaps. Last time, I saw a moth fly out of that green

pleated silk in the front so I bet there are mice inside."

"Bags ask Daddy for some of *his* old things," said Di, suddenly setting off at a run towards the house.

"Bags half," said Theo, following her, for Mrs. Irving, the old clothes dealer, had said that men's clothes sold best.

The girls had first found her little shop when they had taken a short cut to the station from their dancing-class in the neighbouring town. 'Old Clothes Wanted' a rather fly-blown notice had said, in the middle of a muddled window: but when they had taken her theirs and been shown into the parlour at the back of the shop they had found it to be amazingly clean and, as Theo observed, furnished sort of *richly*.

"But frightfully crammed," objected Di, "and I hate her chimney-piece cover, all plush and bobbles, and her piano is loathsome."

"Oh yes, I know you can hardly move in it. But I *am* quite good at recognizing antiques, you know Mummy says so, and I'm sure she's got a couple of Chippendale chairs there and some *lovely* Sheffield silver on the sideboard. I expect she bought everything second-hand, like the clothes."

"*She's* rather antique too, isn't she, but quite a dear."

"So's her seedcake—antique, I mean—but it was nice of her to give it to us."

"And we did get thirty bob towards Mummy's birthday present, so if we get a nice lot of things now it ought to see us through Christmas. There are some people you simply *can't* give only a card to."

"And we can't ask for our Christmas tips in advance so that we can buy presents for the people who give them to us."

But this time, things didn't go smoothly right from the very start. Mother said firmly that she had lots of old clothes but unfortunately she still had to wear them: Daphne, their elder sister said that hers were all going to the refugees and if they were so mean as to put all their savings into Premium Bonds it was their own funeral.

"But don't you *see*," urged Theo, "if we win anything we

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE



Their father, too, seemed anxious to keep his wardrobe.

can give you a jolly big cheque for the refugees and that will be much more use."

This did not soften Daphne who said that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush in such a way that there was no further argument.

Their father, too, seemed to want to keep his wardrobe and when Di pointed out that his old dinner suit didn't fit him any more and probably never would again, he was quite offended. . . . However, as Theo said, when you had started anything you had to see it through and in the next few days, after much energetic argument and visits to sympathetic aunts, they had managed to collect enough to fill two suitcases.

They planned to take them to their dancing-class, on Wednesday afternoon and visit Mrs. Irving on their way back. But on Wednesday morning, Mother telephoned the

school to say the class had been put off and they were to come straight home instead of taking the train to Warchester.

"Oh well," said Theo, "it'll have to be Saturday."

Saturday was their other half-holiday. After lunch they lugged the suitcases to the station to catch the two-fifteen train. The first thing that met their eyes was a chalked notice that said trains would be up to two hours late, owing to repairs on the line. Perkins the porter, with whom they were great friends, explained that an engine had been derailed and added cheerfully that fog was coming up so that it would be as well if the repairs were finished soon.

Di and Theo gazed dismally down the line. You couldn't see far, it was true, and the air had that wintry stillness that meant that the fog would settle.

"Just the same," said Theo, "we've started this——"

"And we've got to see it through," snapped Di crossly, plumping down on one of the suitcases. "I suppose you mean we should freeze here for another couple of hours."

"We're not freezing anywhere. We'll just go right home and ask Daphne if she'll take us in the car. I should think it's the least she can do after being so mean and only giving us those old hats that Mrs. Irving probably won't buy."

Di sighed and got up again.

"We could wait until next Wednesday."

"Silly, the classes will have finished by then for the Christmas holidays. It's *got* to be today because we do want our money in good time."

They lugged the cases home again, Di pointing out that Daphne was cutting out a dress and would not at all take kindly to the idea of running them in to Warchester. But here they had their first bit of luck. Daphne had just discovered that she needed another yard of material, without which she could not finish the dress until Monday night, when she wanted to wear it: and in another twenty minutes, the suitcases safely in the boot of the car, they were speeding along the road to Warchester.

As even Daphne could be quite human at times, the three

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE

of them were singing "White Sand and Grey Sand" at the tops of their voices. It wasn't until they drove into the fog that they stopped.

It was the worst fog they had ever been in: it was like a thick, grey blanket hanging across the road. It wasn't gradual, it was *sudden*. One moment you weren't in it at all, the next you couldn't see a thing.



One moment you weren't in it, the next you couldn't see a thing.

"Gosh!" said Daphne, stopping the car, "I suppose we'd better go back."

Di was going to say she supposed so, but Theo cut in.

"Oh, don't let's give up, we may drive into the clear. I'll get out and walk along the kerb so that you can keep straight."

At first Daphne said she could probably manage but, after about ten minutes she let Theo have her way.

"Pity she hasn't got luminous socks," remarked Di, staring at the coloured handkerchief in Theo's hand. "I expect they'd be easier to see."

"I could see much better if my glasses didn't get dimmed," said Daphne crossly. "Here, wipe them for me, will you?"

She took them off and handed them to Di. Without her glasses, Daphne was blinder than a bat. Di made a nervous grab at them but missed: bending to pick them up, she moved her foot and there was an ominous crunch.

"Oh Di, you *haven't*——"

"Only one is broken," said Di, wishing herself at the bottom of the sea.

"Well you don't expect I'm going to drive all the way to Warchester with only one sound eye, do you? No fear, we'll turn somehow and go back. Theo! Theo! Come back, we're stopping."

They had slowed still more during the unfortunate episode of the glasses and had lost sight of the purposeful figure with the coloured handkerchief. Daphne leaned out and called again but there was no response.

"The silly young donkey, she's not deaf, is she?"

"Oh I think all she's doing is just marching along saying we've got to see through what we've started." Even as she said this, Di realized that besides being cross she was being catty but it *was* horrid in the fog and very ghostly. No traffic whatsoever had gone past except a couple of bicycles, and she longed to be safe in the clear air again.

They both leaned out and bellowed: "THEO!" at the tops of their voices and they thought they heard a faint response. Or was it an echo?

"I'd better go after her," said Daphne, scrambling out of the car. "You stay there and sound the horn if you hear anything coming."

Di began to protest that *she* had better go, but Daphne paid no attention and soon her footsteps on the pavement faded into the horrid silence. About two minutes later they came back again. . . . But no, it wasn't Daphne this time; it

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE



Out of the fog loomed a removal van.

was Theo, running and looking rather pale and frightened.

"I say, can you come? It's Daph—she ran slap into a lamp-post and I think she's knocked herself out. What on earth happened to her glasses?"

Di explained, feeling still more frightened as she groped through the fog and lost sight of the car. They *must* get out of it. . . . But when they reached Daphne, a crumpled heap on the pavement, it was perfectly obvious that she was not in a condition to drive. She stirred and moaned a bit but did not come round. . . . Di's heart sank. Theo said determinedly:

"We'll get her back to the car. You take her legs and I'll take her head. But I think she ought to see a doctor."

"Listen," said Di eagerly. Something was coming along the road from Warchester. Theo went into the road and waved her handkerchief. Out of the fog came a van, driven by a rather unpleasant-looking man. He stopped, his brakes squealing horribly.

"I say, could you possibly take our sister back to a doctor? She's hurt her head!"

The man gave a horrid, jeering kind of laugh.

"Sorry, kid, no room."

"But she's hurt——"

He started up his van and Theo got hastily out of the way.

"*What* a beast! I've got his number though! I don't know who the person is one complains to about meanness, but I'm sure there must be somebody. . . . How is she?"

Daphne had stirred and muttered something vaguely. She looked horribly white. Di, near tears, said:

"Oh Theo, what are we to do? I—I'm frightened."

"So am I but I've got to drive this car."

"You can't, you're only fifteen and a half."

"You mean I can but I shouldn't. Well I'm jolly well going to. If we stay here someone will only bump into us. I know how, Daph once let me try. And I know where we are, roughly—I ran on a bit to find the milestone, I thought we were near it and I was right. I thought I heard you calling but I wasn't quite sure. Anyway. . . ."—Theo got into the

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE

driving seat and looked thoughtfully at the array of gears and levers—"anyway if we drive about another mile further, there's that doctor's house by the bridge, on this side of the road, thank goodness!"

"Couldn't we—couldn't we go back? We do know it's clear at home."

"We can't go back," said Theo simply, "because I don't know how to turn round. Here goes!"

The car gave a sort of hiccup forward and then slowed to a crawl.

"Shall I get out and walk along as you did?"

"No, I think I can manage. I can *just* see the kerb but no wonder Daph couldn't, I bet her glasses were foggy all the time."

At this point, much to Di's relief, Daphne spoke. Without opening her eyes she said: "I'll be all right soon and you'll get into the most frightful trouble if anyone sees you driving—you haven't a licence!"

"They can't: it's too foggy. Shut up, I'll soon have you at the doctor's."

"I'm all *right*, only a bit dizzy."

"People should always see the doctor when they've had a bang on the head. We learnt that at First Aid."

"I *say*!" said Di excitedly. "I do believe it's clearing. You can see about ten yards ahead."

Instead of being still and thick, the fog had a swirling look: visibility was better and then, just a few hundred yards from the doctor's, it became quite clear. It was like coming out of a nightmare. At the gate of the doctor's house, Theo stopped the car, wiped her forehead and observed:

"You know, I think I'll get to *like* driving when I can do it in decent weather. Do hop out Di, and see whether the doc's in. If he isn't, perhaps they'd let Daphne wait." As Di flew up the drive, she added: "And I wish I could just tell that furniture van man what I think of him!"

"Furniture van?" murmured Daphne in dreamy surprise.

"It was when you were knocked out. He wouldn't stop to

help us. And there was something *funny* about that van." Theo stopped and wrinkled her brow. She had just remembered what she noticed when she took his number. . . .

Their second piece of good luck that day was that the doctor *was* in and proved to be, as Theo said, "a rattling good sort." Daphne had had a nasty bump but just needed rest and they could all stay there until the fog lifted.

"Actually, there's quite a breeze outside and it may not be very long; so if you'll wait while I visit someone in Warchester, I'll perhaps be able to run you home."

Theo sat up eagerly. "I say—if you're *really* going into Warchester, could Di and I come, too? Daphne perhaps could rest here till we collect her later."

Di started to say something about cashing their Premium Bonds after all, but Theo gave her a gentle kick to be quiet so she subsided. You couldn't argue with Theo when she looked like that; but really she *was* overdoing things! . . . And really there was *no* need to take the doctor into her confidence about the old clothes, which she did as they drove into Warchester. It was true he roared with laughter but it somehow made Di feel silly.

"Old Mrs. Irving?" mused the doctor. "Yes, I know the one you mean. When her husband was alive, they kept an antique shop. She's supposed to be very rich but people always say that about old ladies who live alone and don't spend anything."

"Well I hope she is. We have heaps of things to sell, but we don't get a terrible lot out of her, she always says everything's the wrong size or no one wants that kind of thing and so on. But she *did* give us some extra last time, when Di played her piano for her. Didn't she, Di?"

Di, fed and shy and furious in the back seat, did not answer. The doctor chuckled.

"If you just wait while I call on Mrs. Evans and give her her injection, I'll take you along there afterwards. I'll only be about ten minutes and it isn't far."

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE



The doctor was in and proved to be a rattling good sort.

"That's awfully nice of you but you *could* drop us at the bridge. . . ."

"No, it's far easier for me to take you there if I'm going to bring you back."

When he had gone into Mrs. Evans's house, Di leaned over and gave Theo a good piece of her mind.

". . . and all that business of seeing a thing through when you've started it can be a bit overdone. And it was awful *cheek* of you to ask the doctor if we might go with him."

"He's the sort of person who doesn't mind and he was coming here anyway. Stop fussing, for goodness' sake, you needn't go all fluttery just because you've had an adventure."

Di stormed that she didn't like being laughed at, that fog was jolly frightening and that she was tired of being a doormat. Theo listened calmly, with her eyes closed and by the time the doctor came out again, Di had fallen into sulky



Theo got out of the car and went to the shop door.

silence. When they drove into the little back street where Mrs. Irving lived, she felt spitefully pleased that the shop was in darkness.

"Closed?" said the doctor. "Too bad about your Christmas money. Shall I turn round?"

"No—no, *please*." Theo got out of the car and went to the shop door. There was a crudely written message on it. "Back soon."

"There," said Di, who had followed her, "does *that* satisfy you? We've seen it through to the end."

Theo muttered that she was not so sure about that, walked up the street a little way and then plunged down an entry. Di returned to the doctor: "I say, I'm awfully sorry. Theo's awful when she's got a bee in her bonnet. There's a notice saying "Back soon" and I don't think she believes it because she's gone round the back way."

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE

"A persistent young woman, your sister," said the doctor, lighting a cigarette, "but plucky. Remember you'd all have been sitting in the road quite helplessly if she hadn't known how to drive."

- In spite of the fact that she was angry with Theo, Di glowed at this praise of her sister and explained that Theo was awfully good at noticing things no one else did.

"I must have watched Daddy and Daphne heaps of times but I would never have known how to drive. But she's awfully stubborn too and never takes no for an answer. Daddy says she carries it to extremes and really, you would think *anyone* would realize Mrs. Irving is out, wouldn't you? Or perhaps she's seeing if there's a shed where we can leave these suitcases, with a note."

About five minutes later, Theo reappeared at the entry and frantically waved her hand.

- "I expect she wants you to go and play 'The Rustle of Spring,'" said the doctor, his lips twitching. . . . But even when Di had reached her, Theo continued to wave and after a minute or two, Di did too. The doctor sighed, got out of the car and then automatically reached for his little black bag. Such a frantic summons might mean that he would need it. . . .

Mrs. Irving's parlour wasn't crammed any more. In fact the only articles of furniture left were the table with its plush cloth, the piano, and the old sofa on which Theo had found her, tied up and gagged. . . . After a time, during which she sipped something out of a glass that the doctor gave her, she stopped looking pale blue and gasping and managed to speak.

"Oh my dears—God bless you for coming! A furniture van—you wouldn't expect burglars in a furniture van, now would you? They—they threatened to hit me if I cried out. One of them held me and the other tied me up and stuffed handkerchiefs in my mouth so that I couldn't speak. I—if you hadn't come, I might have been here all the week-end and—and——"

The old lady seemed near tears. Theo patted her and looked round grimly.



Mrs. Irving on the sofa could neither move nor utter a sound.

"I see they've helped themselves to all the best things. But didn't your neighbours notice anything? I mean, you never told anyone you were moving, did you?"

"I still do sell a bit of furniture now and again. They're quite used to that. And on Saturdays, what with people being paid on Fridays and going to the football match, there isn't much doing in the way of old clothes."

"Don't try to talk much now," said the doctor soothingly, "but do you think you'd know them again?"

Mrs. Irving said she thought she did know one of them;

THEODORA'S FIRST CASE

she thought he had once done odd jobs for her husband.

"But cute as a cartload of monkeys he always was and he'll be miles away by now. I'm lucky to be spared, it's no use worrying. What's lost is lost."

"He won't get far," said Theo calmly. "I got the number of the van. He was a beast and wouldn't stop for us so I took his number and we can give it to the police."

"How do you know it's the same van?" demanded Di.

"Well, there were two Chippendale chairs in the back of it and Mrs. Irving's chimneypiece cover was over them—only it had slipped down. And although Chippendale chairs are rare, they *might* have belonged to someone else but you don't see those kind of covers very often, so I knew the chairs were yours. And I didn't think you'd sell anything so precious to such a beast so I simply had to come and see that you were all right."

"I," said the doctor, "am going to ring the police. And I shall suggest they employ you, young lady, when you leave school. Anything else would be a wicked waste."

"Hear that, Theo?" said Di. "Congratulations on your first case!"

The doctor went into the shop, where there was a telephone. Mrs. Irving started to say something about there being seed-cake in the larder.

"I suppose they robbed your till," said Di, "but I *do* hope you keep most of your money in the Bank."

Mrs. Irving smiled.

"Well—I ought to, but up to now I've had my own little place." She looked across at the piano and the girls followed her gaze. Di wondered wildly whether she was going to be asked to play. Surely the moment wasn't quite right for it? Or did Mrs. Irving want soothing down?

"It's a good piano, that is. Wants tuning, I don't deny, but it's got more uses than you'd think. Play it if you like, ducky, but just open the top first and see what's inside."

So Di opened the piano and took out several bundles of notes—fivers too, she saw—and gasped.

"Bring them over to me," said Mrs. Irving. With trembling fingers, she took out two and handed them one each.

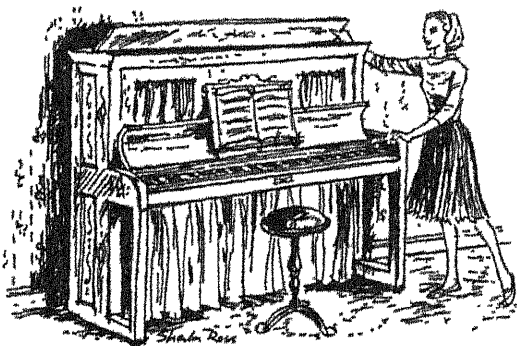
"I *say*," said Di, "it's wonderful of you but I don't think we ought——"

"A little Christmas present," said the old lady, "and I'll be very hurt if you don't take it."

"Then," said Theo determinedly, "you must have all the old clothes we brought. They're not nearly worth that but since we lugged them all the way, it would be silly to take them back. And once you've started a thing——"

"You see it through to the end," finished Di sweetly.

When the doctor came back into the parlour, she was playing "The Rustle of Spring" and not caring in the least about the missing notes. And Theo was biting into a huge piece of seedcake. There was nothing like adventure, she thought, to make you simply ravenous!





My First Wild Horse

BARBARA WOODHOUSE

FOR a lover of horses the Argentine is the saddest place to live, for these most intelligent and willing animals and servants of man are never treated as they should be, but are roughly handled from the first. I think I learnt to speak fluent Spanish more quickly than usual because of my rages—as when, for example, I saw a brute of a man knock a horse's eye out with one lash. . . . I learnt to upbraid them in no mild language; but all they said was that horses were worth only a few pesos, and they must be taught quickly. Hence the cruel method of breaking a horse in, by lashing it to make it gallop and then pulling it fiercely back on to its haunches. Three men and horses all putting a concerted pull on its mouth at the same time. I pleaded with them to be kind, but it had no effect, so I decided to show them that I could break horses as

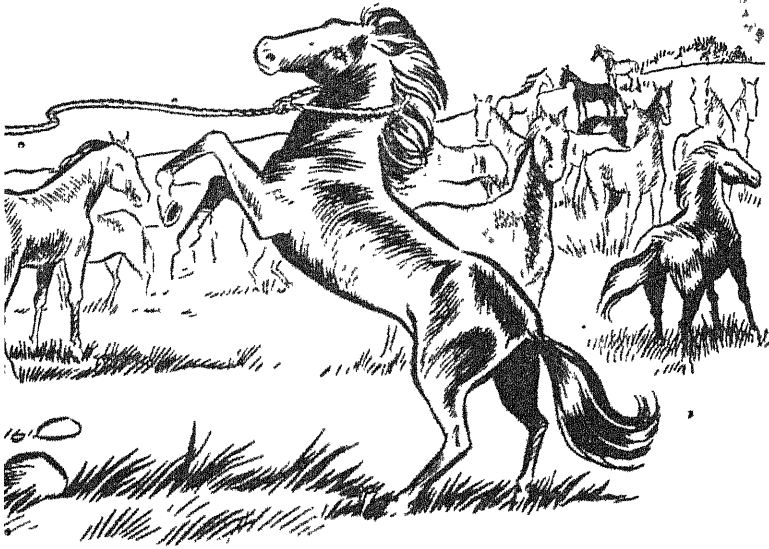


The moment the rope encircled her neck she beg

quickly and as well as they could and without any cruelty. I begged the manager of the *estancia* to let me have a three year old to start on, but he refused point blank. "Women don't break horses out here, that is a man's job," he said, and all my pleading fell on deaf ears.

But I don't believe in being defeated in anything I really wish to do, so I bided my time. Shortly after this the whole of the unit went many miles away out into the camp on a branding job and were away for three days. The only people left were myself, my old Indian cook, and the old native who chopped our logs for us and did all the odd jobs such as butchering. I saw the men off, and then went out to the barn to find old Fernandez. I think he liked me, for I was the only person there who treated him like an ordinary human being and not as a slave. I asked him how long the *capitas* and *patron* would be away, and he said, "Three sun downs," so I told him that before they came back I wanted to break

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fling herself about like a salmon on the line.

in a horse to do everything that their own horses could do. He looked at me as if I were mad, but listened to me when I suggested that we should ride out in the camp together to the wild herd and that he should lasso one of the horses for me. I promised him tobacco and money, and with much wagging of his head he agreed.

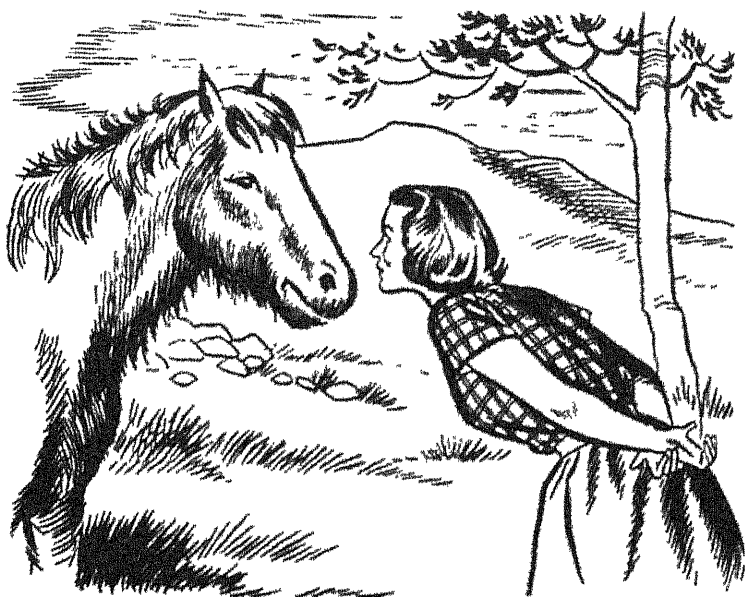
I could hardly wait whilst he ponderously saddled his fat old mare and went to fetch a little bay pony for me. Together we rode out and at last came to the herd. At first they paid no attention to us and we quietly rode round them. Then I saw what I wanted, a beautiful golden chestnut with four white socks and a blaze down her face. I pointed her out to Fernandez but he shook his head. "Don't have her," he said, "she has a mala Cara," which means a bad white face, and in the eyes of the natives suggests a bad bargain even before you start. But I knew this to be nonsense, and told him to catch her. Neatly the rope encircled her neck, and then she

flung herself about like a salmon on a line. But eventually she was tied to the ring in the saddle of his own horse, and his old mount played the youngster like an experienced fisherman. Bit by bit she stopped pulling, and in the end we got her tied up near the house on a rawhide halter and a rope. By this time the old man was terrified of what he'd done and begged me to let her go again, for he said the master would kill him when he came home. I told him it was nonsense: that Englishmen didn't behave like that, and that I myself would take full responsibility. And in any case I had heard the *patron* telling him before he left to do all that I wanted. Miserably he slunk off to his barn to continue his routine task of scraping the fat and flesh off the sheep skins to make them ready for the tannery. I could hardly believe my luck. Here was this gorgeous creature for me to tame, and no one to say me nay.

I approached her gently, speaking in a low caressing tone of voice. She flinched at first on my approach and snorted furiously, but did nothing more. I then stroked her nose and her neck and ran my fingers gently down her mane, for I knew that horses loved this, and soon she stood quite dreamily still; so I then ran my hands down her legs and picked up her feet, talking gently and soothingly all the time. Next I went down her body and picked up her back legs; then round the other side and back to her head. Then I got a sack and gently slapped her all over with it. She leapt in the air with the first feel of it, but soon, when she found it did not hurt her, she paid no more attention to it. I whisked it over her back and under her tummy. I slapped her legs gently, and down her tail. I then dropped the sack off her back until she no longer flinched, and that ended the first lesson. Next I taught her to eat sugar by putting it between her back teeth. At first she spat it out, so the next time I held it in her mouth until it had nearly melted. That worked wonderfully, and in no time she was crunching up as much as I could give her. But I kept it as a reward for everything new that I wished to teach her. I next fetched my saddle and put it on her back

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with a very loose girth. Up went her back in a terrific buck, but I talked to her and moved the saddle about, and then tightened the girth one hole and made her move. This time she hunched her back but did not buck, so I tightened it up to make it safe, and then got an old wood block and put it by her side, so that I could stand on it and lean heavily over her,



Talking to a horse—Indian fashion.

talking all the while. She never stirred, so gently I slung my leg over her and slid on and off about three times like this. I then put reins on the side pieces of her head-collar, since I do not believe in bits, and I sat on her back whilst she was still tied up. Next I urged her forward a pace or two, and then said "Ssh" and pulled her to a stop on the reins. Encouraged by her docility I slipped off the rope she was tied up with, and leant over to pull gently on the head-collar to urge her forward. She walked on, and after half an hour of

this I unsaddled her and took her out into the small paddock by the house and tied the long rope to a movable tree trunk and let her wander. At first she was terrified of the log moving along after her but soon she got accustomed to it. After lunch I brought her in again and rode her for another half hour. Soon she was trotting and walking well, but I still had the feeling that she might panic at any minute.

By the end of the three days this pony was going extremely well, I opened the gates of the corral, told old Fernandez to follow me at a distance, and off I went on her for my first ride. It was without incident for some time, until something frightened her in the grass, when she put herself into a series of bucks that would have done credit to a buck-jumping contest. I was ready for it, for all the time she had felt to me as if the slightest error on my part would make her try to get rid of me. However, we came home safely, and I caressed her lovingly and let her free in the small paddock near the house. Next morning I rode along for an hour, and so her breaking continued smoothly.

On the last day before the men came home, I met an old Guarani Indian riding a beautiful little bay mare. We stopped and said polite things to each other, and I told him I was taming the chestnut I was on. He said he thought only his own tribe knew the secret of taming horses without fear, and, when asked what it was he told me to watch next time I turned strange horses out together and to see what they did. I asked what he meant, and he told me that horses always go up to each other and sniff each other's noses, which is their way of saying "How do you do?" in their language, and that he always did the same thing when he wished to tame a horse himself. He said: "Stand with your hands behind your back and blow gently down through your nostrils. Keep quite still, and the horse will come up to you and sniff and will blow up your own nose after which all fear will have left him. That horse, providing that you don't give it reason to turn vicious will always be your friend and the friend of man." And with that he cantered off at the easy gallop of the

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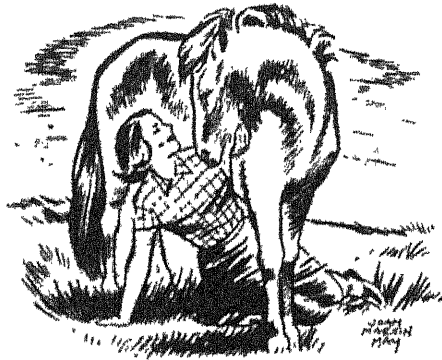
perfectly matched horse and rider, with his reins hanging loosely and without a saddle, just a blanket on the horse's back.

That evening the men came home and I told them what I had been up to, and of course got the most severe scolding possible. Fernandez was threatened with the sack, but I pointed out that it was my fault entirely and that he had been ordered to do what I wanted. No more was said until I gave a little show with my mala Cara, who behaved like a lamb, and the manager said he supposed I could break a horse. I felt this was the moment to ask for another, for I was dying to try out the Guarani's trick. So another was caught up for me. I sniffed up her nose and immediately stroked her and saddled her up. From her behaviour she might have been an old horse, for she never flinched or snorted or showed any sign of fear. I cut out the preliminary sack flapping and fondling and gently mounted her, loosed the rope, and with my heels urged her on. She went smoothly with me, and I never for a second had that feeling that I had had with the other horse, that at any minute she and I might part company. In twenty minutes in the corral I taught her to stop, and to turn, and to trot, and then I asked the men watching me to open the gate and away we went. In an hour she was cantering, turning, stopping, and allowing me to mount and dismount without any protest or signs of fear.

I knew the Indian was right, for that horse never put a foot wrong and in three days was a completely trained pony. I could safely round up cattle with her, open and shut gates, and so on; and all this on a head-collar only. I have won many a bet in England that I would do anything normal on a horse without saddle or bridle, winning simply because I knew that my horse knew every command of voice. For a bet, I have played fast polo on reins of one strand of "50" cotton. My success with the Guarani's trick gave me the chance in life I had always wanted, for from now on, instead of the *peons* being paid to tame the horses, they were given more useful jobs, like fencing, to do, and I was promoted

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to be horse-breaker at ten shillings per horse. The Inspector of the cattle company was told about me and came out later to see why a woman was allowed to do this. He rode one of my horses that had been completely untouched two hours before and could find no fault in it except lack of experience. It was thus that I became the happiest woman on earth in my self-chosen job.





The White Bungalow

A Ghost Story

A. J. ALAN

THE place we go to every year for our summer holiday is called Littlebury-on-Sea. It's about seventeen miles from Plymouth.

It isn't exactly a village but just a collection of forty or fifty bungalows dotted about on the edge of the cliff.

There's a shop, of course, which is also the post-office, and opening out of the post-office there's a highly efficient telephone exchange—six feet by three.

As you can imagine, one rather leads the simple life down there, and no one, at least who is anyone, wears anything but

rags. A man certainly once did appear in decent clothes, but his body was found floating some days afterwards.

We even occasionally take in each other's washing—not in the usually accepted sense—but what I mean is that if you see the paper-man trying to deliver a suspicious-looking bundle next door, when you know they're out, you harbour it till they come in.

That's the sort of place it is and no ceremony to speak of is stood on. . . .

As a general rule, the day after we get down and the unpacking's finished, my wife and I make a little tour of inspection. We go first of all and pay our respects to Mr. and Mrs. Jupp at the post-office, and then we stroll round to see what's been altered or built since the summer before.

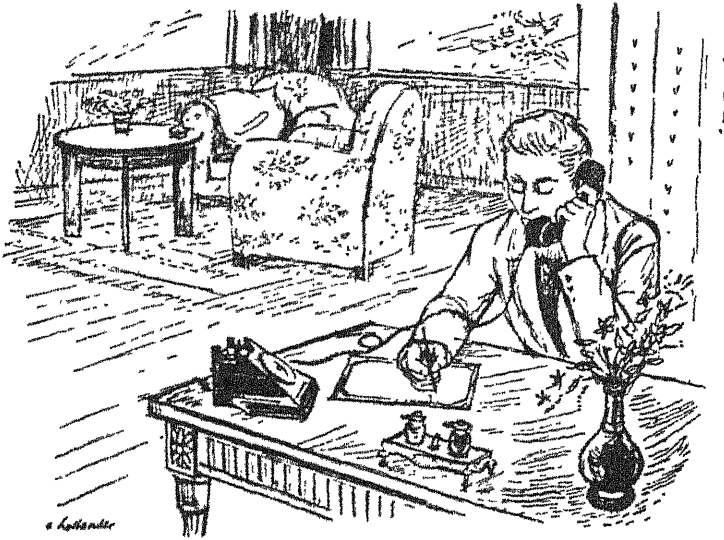
Well, we did that this year, and after we'd thoroughly inspected Littlebury-on-Sea we wandered along the cliff and down into the next cove called Fallaborough. There are bungalows there, too, and we found a brand-new one, standing rather by itself. It was all painted white and evidently only just finished. We walked round outside the fence and admired it, and as we were walking round and admiring it we both noticed that the telephone bell was ringing, and it went on and on.

My wife, who's an extremely tidy woman, said: "I wish they'd answer their telephone." But no one did, and we finally came to the conclusion that everyone was out. That being so, it seemed a bit callous to go away and let poor Miss Links, up at the exchange, go on ringing, so I said: "I shall go in and tell her that there's no one at home." Which I proceeded to do.

I walked up the garden path and in at the front door. It was wide open—people don't shut their front doors down there—and it led straight into a big living-room. I looked round for the telephone and eventually found it on a writing-table tucked away in a sort of alcove. It was a pretty room, rather irregular in shape.

This writing-table had the usual things on it, ink-stand,

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I took off the telephone receiver and listened.

pen, pencils, clock, and so on, and there was a vase with flowers in it. The clock was right and the pencils were properly sharpened, so I imagined it to be a man's writing-table. I took off the telephone-receiver and heard a confused sort of noise going on, which meant I was on to a trunk line and not just the local exchange. I said "Hullo" at intervals, and while I waited I picked up one of the pencils and made a note of the time, so as it was exactly a quarter to six I wrote down the figures 17.45 on the top left-hand corner of a clean white blotting-pad which was on the table.

Well, I went on saying "Hullo" and getting no answer, when suddenly a woman's voice cut in. It struck me that she was rather agitated. She said: "Is that the White Bungalow?" I said: "It's certainly *a* white bungalow and quite possibly *the* White Bungalow, but there's no one in and I'm only just answering the telephone."

Then she said: "Are you at Fallaborough?" (Still more agitated.) And I told her I was, and then she said: "Will you

go up at once to the Coastguard Station and tell them there's been an accident. A little girl has fallen off the Chair Rock and is lying unconscious just below it. The tide's coming in and if they aren't quick she'll be drowned."

I said "Right" and slammed the receiver on and ran out to my missis, who was still standing by the garden gate, and I told her what the situation was. By the way, I think I ought to explain a little bit what the coast beyond Fallaborough is like. It's very wild indeed and people only go along there for prawning. The cliffs are over two hundred feet high and the beach is merely a mass of big rocks. This beach is rather divided off into sections by buttresses of cliff which stick out. You can get past them till about three-quarter tide, and then you can't. The Chair Rock, which I knew quite well, where the accident had happened, was at the end of the first section from Fallaborough Cove, where we were.

We had a look at the tide and saw that it wasn't quite up to the foot of the first buttress, and there was still just time to get round, so we decided that the best thing to do was for me to go straight for the place along the beach, while she, my wife that is, went back to Fallaborough village and collected some coastguards and ropes and things. *They* would have to follow along the top of the cliffs.

At all events, I scrambled along for something like half a mile over slimy boulders, and in and out of pools, and finally got to this Chair Rock.

At the foot of it there's a large flat slab, and on it was lying the daintiest little maiden you ever saw. She was as pretty as a picture, in spite of the fact that she had a bump on her forehead the size of a golf ball. I reckoned she must have taken a toss from at least fifteen feet up. She was completely unconscious, anyway.

It was a good thing I'd hurried because the waves were beginning to wash over her. I picked her up as carefully as I could and waded ashore. There was a convenient patch of shingle at high-water mark and I deposited her on that.

I hunted for broken bones and further damage and

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She must have fallen from at least fifteen feet up.

couldn't find any, so it wasn't a very serious accident after all, but it easily might have been. What I mean is—supposing you're only stunned, if you're drowned before you recover you're just as dead as if you'd been killed. Another few minutes and she'd have been an angel. However, she wasn't.

Soon after I'd put her down she opened her eyes and tried to sit up. She didn't say: "Where am I?" or anything like that—she simply asked: "What have you done with my prawns?"

I said: "I haven't seen your prawns, and in any case they don't matter a—well, they *don't* matter." And I adjured her to lie down and not to fuss. But oh, no, that wouldn't do. She wanted her prawns there and then. She'd gone out specially to get them for her daddy's supper and nothing would satisfy her but the immediate production of these—er—beasts. She told me exactly what they were like. They were in a tin, apparently, and three in number, and one of them had longer whiskers than the other two. I said: "Never mind about their whiskers—I shall know them by their tin," and I promised that if she'd stop quite still I'd go back to the rocks and have a good look.

She gave me her word not to move and I waded forth into the breakers on what looked like a perfectly hopeless quest, but, and I know you won't believe me, I found this tin bobbing up and down about twenty yards out. Yes. The only thing was that its three occupants were shrimps and not prawns, though I wouldn't have told her so for all the world. At the age of six one's shrimps are apt to be prawns.

Just then there were loud cries from the top of the cliff and presently a coastguard came slithering down in a boatswain's chair on the end of a rope.

We conferred and then we tied the young woman into this boatswain's chair and sent her up first, complete with courtesy prawns, and she howled with glee all the way. Then I went, and finally the coastguard.

At the top, I found my wife and four more coastguards. The distressed heroine was beginning to feel a little sick, so ~~that~~ I brought a stretcher, we thought it safer to put her

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on it and make her stay there until the doctor had seen her.

Actually, I wasn't allowed to take part in the triumphal procession. My missis told me that I was sopping wet and must run on home and change—which I did. However, when she got back to our bungalow about an hour later she said the patient was doing well. They'd first of all taken her to the Coastguard Station where she'd been overhauled by the doctor. He said that bar the crack on the head and a certain amount of shock, she hadn't come to any harm. They were going to take her home after she'd had a bit of a rest.

Then my wife said: "It's rather funny about where she lives!" and she said: "Well, she comes from that white bungalow where you answered the telephone."

I agreed it was a bit of a coincidence, although really, when one came to think of it, she'd got to live somewhere, and there was no earthly reason why it shouldn't have been there just as well as anywhere else.

It wasn't even strange about the message or our not knowing who'd sent it. If it was anyone walking along the cliff from the other direction, who'd spotted the girl from above, the first thing that would occur to them would be to run back the way they'd come, to give the alarm, and that would account for our not having come across them. We didn't worry our heads any more about it, but after dinner, when we were out for another stroll, we thought it would be rather polite to go down and enquire after the patient, so we did.

The parents were in by this time, quite nice people, and they told us that Susan was in bed and asleep, and developing a lovely black eye, but otherwise going on quite well. Then the mother said: "Are you by any chance the good samaritans who rescued her?"

We hastily assured her that there hadn't been anything in the nature of rescue work. It had merely been a question of removing their daughter a little farther up the beach out of harm's way. As I pointed out, one would have done the same for any towel one had found too near the edge, and she was worth quite a lot of towels. However, they insisted on being

embarrassingly grateful, and then the mother turned to her husband and said: "Shall we tell them, George?" He said: "You can if you like, but they won't believe you," and then she told us quite an astonishing story.

That afternoon she and her husband had motored into Plymouth. They'd done some shopping and got their hair cut, and then they'd gone and called on the architect who'd designed their bungalow. I forget exactly what it was about—something to do with the hot water, I think. Actually, she didn't go in. George went in, and she sat and waited in the car—and while she waited she fell asleep and dreamed a dream. Nothing in that, of course, and it *has* been done before, but this was a very peculiar dream indeed, as it turned out.

She dreamt that she was on the top of the cliff immediately above the Chair Rock. She looked down and saw Susan spread out on the stone just below it, in fact she described most accurately how she was lying when I found her, with the tide coming and all the rest of it. There she was, unable to get down or do anything to help, and yet all the time she knew herself to be miles away in Plymouth. She felt that if only she could get to a telephone, something might be done, but, of course, she couldn't move hand or foot, as you often can't in dreams. It must have been very terrible for her.

The idea of wanting to telephone was so strong that when George came out and woke her she wanted him to go back into the office again and ring up the coastguards at Falla-borough to see if everything was all right. He naturally wouldn't and rather laughed at her, but he tried to drive home faster than he usually did. Unfortunately they had engine trouble on the way and took nearly two hours to get back, otherwise my wife would have seen them.

At all events, she, the mother, finished up by saying: "It seems like a direct intervention of Providence that you were walking along the beach at the time." So I said: "But I wasn't walking along the beach at the time. I got a telephone ~~message~~ telling me exactly where to go to, otherwise I

